HONMON BUTSURYU SHU

The Teachings & Practices

BERSERKER
BOOKS

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Part I The Teachings Of HBS

1

Outline of HBS

The king of sutras, —The Lotus Sutra—

Buddhism is a religion based on the teachings of Buddha Shakyamuni, who was born in India 2600 years ago. Today in Japan, Buddhism is divided into hundreds of different sects because of the various sutras. For fifty years, Buddha continuously preached his teachings to innumerable people. His teachings, taught through various periods and in different regions, were later consolidated and edited into textbooks. These textbooks have been preserved and handed down to our generation.

There is no uniformity in the contents of Buddha's diverse sutras. Each separate sutra tells what one should believe in, how it should be practiced, how matters should be looked at, and how it should be thought out. The contents of each sutra differ because each and every sutra is applied to each individual's situation, one's circumstances;one's sufferings, or capabilities. Each sutra preached by Buddha is a worthy teaching.

After Buddha's death, Buddhism spread from India into China, to Southeast Asia and to Japan. During this period of transition, the various Buddhist preachers could not decide upon which sutra was the most important. Gradually, thereafter, many different factions appeared.

The teachings of HBS, are based on the Lotus Sutra (Hokekyo). From ancient times, the Scripture called the Lotus Sutra was respected by numerous people beyond sectionalism.

For example, the eminent Zen master, Dogen (1200—1253) said;"The Lotus Sutra is the king of sutras". Arnold Toynbee, a renowned historian, said, "If you were to select 10 books which should be passed on to the 21st Century, I will recommend the Lotus Sutra be one of them from the standpoint of Buddhism".

From ancient times, many preachers researched the Lotus Sutra and practiced its teachings, but the only preacher who grasped the essence of the Lotus Sutra and enlightened it to the masses that it was the true teaching and how it should be practiced was Nichiren Shonin, the greatest religious person, who played an active role about 750 years ago.

What is HBS?

HBS is a sect founded by Priest Seifu Nagamatsu about 150 years ago. It is based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin (The Buddhist master). Today, Rev Nagamatsu is referred to as

Nissen Shonin. He started HBS in order to reform Nichiren Buddhism.

From the early 17th century and for 250 years thereafter, Japan was in the Edo Era, a period controlled by the Tokugawa Shogunates. During this period, the religious groups, were under the jurisdiction of a dictatorial government, and their activities were confined to the role of praying for the deceased and conducting funerals.

Nissen Shonin played an active role from the end of the Edo Era through the Meiji Period, The Meiji Era began in 1868 under the newly established Emperor System. At this time, Nissen Shonin was considered a scholar and a cultural personality.

After the death of his mother, Nissen Shonin became interested in Buddhism. At the age of 32, he convinced himself that the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and of Nichiren Shonin were the true teachings of Buddhism, and became a priest. At age 41, he established HBS.

Presently, there are about 400 HBS temples throughout Japan; 11 in Brazil; 2 in America;6 in Korea;1 in Taiwan and 1 in Australia,and also 1 meeting house in Srilanka, where about 300,000 worshippers can go to pray and listen to sermons based on the teachings of Nichiren Shonin and on the Lotus Sutra.

What is the difference between HBS and the other sects?

Not only HBS worships the teachings of Nichiren Shonin and the Lotus Sutra. Traditional sects, known as Nichirenshu and Hokkeshu and newly formed sects like Reiyukai, Risshokoseikai, and Sokagakkai, all preach the teachings of Nichiren Shonin and the Lotus Sutra.

What is the difference between these groups and HBS?

Firstly, Sokagakkai places Nichiren Shonin above Buddha and reveres him as God, like Christians revere their God.

HBS does not consider Nichiren Shonin as God. He was the great master, who acted as a messenger to propagate and perpetuate the teachings of Buddha. He personally moved among the masses and directly communicated with them.

Sokagakkai is also referred to as the Ikeda religion. Daisaku Ikeda has sent several of his staff members to the Japanese parliament. He has exerted political influence there by acting from behind the scenes. He enjoys unrestricted power to control the organization.

HBS considers this religious group to be a mind—controlling sect and considers it to be a very dangerous organization which has distorted the true essence of Buddhism.

HBS dose not engage in politics.

Secondly, traditional Buddhist sects only pray for the dead. They have forgotten that their mission is to deliver the teachings of Buddhism to their devotees and to guide them accordingly. Other than Sokagakkai, these groups have incorporated the popular versions of superstition and fortune—tellings into their activities. This is not included in the teachings of Nichiren Shonin or the Lotus Sutra. Therefore, these sects are not true Buddhist organizations.

The difference between Buddhism and Christianity

The biggest difference between Buddhism and Christianity is that Buddhism calls for the act of practice by placing your heart, body and mouth in the center to obtain the fruits and merits of the faith. This is the basic posture of Buddhism.

Buddhist practices can be divided into two parts:

1. Mind concentration, like that of Zen. Through this practice, people can observe the state of affairs in their own heart, the evil thoughts contained therein, and to awaken Buddha nature hidden deep

under their soul.

2. Verbal practice. Chanting the names of Buddhas and sutras. This prepares one's body and soul to recieve it's power.

HBS takes the position to practice its faith by mouth. Unless one is gifted with great intelligence and ability, it is difficult to control one's heart to draw out Buddha nature by meditation alone, and to practice it haphazardly only causes confusion and damage to one's body and soul.

Based on the teachings of Nichiren Shonin, HBS observes the verbal practice by chanting out loud repeatedly the phrase, "Namumyohorengekyo", which is also known as the "Odaimoku".

Other sects merely read aloud. rhythmically the names of Buddhas and sutras.

What is "NAMU-MYOHO-RENGE-KYO"(Odaimoku)?

One may asks what significant effect repeated chanting of the phrase, "Namu—myoho—renge—kyo" has? It is difficult to explain it in these few pages. However, to summarize it, praying in front of the altar by repeated chanting of the phrase, "Namumyohorengekyo", invokes a mysterious power which improve the health of the sick and helps persons with psychological illnesses. One who constantly chants the "Odaimoku" will be protected from distress and calamity. To illustrate, there is a the proverb, "The proof is in the eating". The following is an actual case.

Professor Kenichiro Tashiro, a neurologist, and now a member of HBS, did not believe in any religion. In fact, he held a negative attitude toward religion. He believed medical technology and religion did not mix, that religion could not cure illnesses in contrast to medicine. He felt that religion was a hindrance to healing through modern medical technology. Therefore, he frequently persuaded his wife, who had practiced with HBS since she was young, to renounce her membership.

Professor Tashiro, who had been leading a successful life, was suddenly confronted with many undesirable circumstances one after another. Due to conditions beyond his control, Professor Tashiro fell into a state of mental anxiety. Being a neurologist, he diagnosed his own mental problem and began selfdiagnosis. His physical condition however began to deteriorate to a point where his colleagues felt he could no longer adequately perform his duties.

His wife strongly advised him to meet Reverend Shingen Kobayashi, Head Priest of the Kokun-ji Temple, in Fukuoka City, where she is a member. Professor Tashiro, who could find no way out of his predicament decided to follow his wife's advice.

Professor Tashiro met Reverend Kobayashi. who, immediately, told Tashiro, "From today, stop taking any medicine. Chant the "O-daimoku" morning and night for an hour. Also let's hold an "O-jogyo" for one whole week"

"O-jogyo" is a practice where other members of the congregation pray together with a distressed person in the hopes of having his request(s) fulfilled. In short, O-jogyo is praying together with the support of others by chanting O-daimoku.

Professor Tashiro, who was plagued with withdrawal symptoms from stopping to take medication endured the hardship. He earnestly prayed by chanting the "Odaimoku" for a week. and from the third day his condition began to improve. On the fourth day, he showed more improvement, and, finally, after a week, he regained his health and was able to return to work.

Shortly thereafter, accompanied by his family, Dr.Tashiro went to America to conduct researches on biochemistry of the brain at the National Institute of Health. He was able to discover a new type of substance relating to the brain.

After returning to Japan, he worked at the Wakahisa Hospital for mental patients in Fukuoka City. He is also continuing his research relating to the brain at the National Kyushu University Hospital. As might be expected he has not missed a day of praying at the Kokunji Temple.

Professor Tashiro said, "My encounter with HBS was like meeting Buddha in Hell. If I had not come in contact with HBS when I was ill, I don't think I would be where I am today. In Japan, there is a treatment for mental patients known as the Morita therapy, which utilizes the Zen principles. I have met several of these patients who were treated by the Morita method, but the treatment must be continued for a long period. By contrast, chanting the "Odaimoku" enabled me to return to work in a very short period. It is a marvelous way of treating mental patients".

Medical effectiveness of the "Odaimoku"

Based on research conducted by medical doctors, it has been proven that chanting the "Odaimoku" improves one's soul and body. The following are some examples:

Professor Tomio Hirai, Chief Neurologist, Tokyo University Hospital, states; "By taking a large and deep breath slowly. the blood becomes less alkaline and it tends to enlarge the blood vessels and the blood flow becomes smoother. It places less burden on the heart and the muscles relaxes. These reactions help to improve the health." One chants the Odaimoku about 35 times per minute in front of the altar in HBS's practice. This is continued for about 30 minutes to an hour. At this time, the breathing rate is about 5-6 times per minute. That means, one is unconsciously taking a deep breath while chanting.

Doctor Yoshio Sakai's research on the effect of chanting has revealed that the breathing becomes deeper, stronger, and longer, which helps to improve one's vitality. It also effectively stimulates the diaphragm.

According to other researchers, continuous chanting of the "Odaimoku" has a good therapeutic effect on the autonomic nervous system, thereby improving health.

By praying earnestly the brain waves changes from beta to alpha. A beta wave is a short, irregular wave. It occurs when one is irritated, broody, or under strain. An alpha wave is smooth, and depicts a curved line. It occurs when one is relaxed and calm. That means that chanting the "Odaimoku" balances the cerebellum and stabilizes mental condition. These conditions show, also from a medical standpoint, that chanting the "Odaimoku" improves the mind and body. But, there is much more to it from the standpoint of HBS. The "Odaimoku" contains an extremly powerful energy. This will be explained in the next chapter.

Law of karma (The law of cause and effect regulating one's future life)

Are you familiar with the word Karma? Sigmund Freud, founder of psychoanalysis and Karl Jung, are doctors who have made studies of the unconscious mind.

Buddhism has expounded more deeply the functions of the unconscious mind, but it is difficult to explain them in detail in this short space. The writer will try to explain what Buddha said about Karma. Our daily activities, such as seeing, hearing, thinking, and what we have done are recorded in the "Arayashiki" (The most fundamental consciousness.) It stores all potential energy, the mental and physical manifestation of one's existence and supplies the substance to all existences. The arayashiki also recieves impressions from all functions of other consciousness and retains them as potential energy for their future manifestations and activities.

In Buddhism, the various experiences recorded deep in the conscious is referred to as "Shuji (seeds)". The term refers to the energy or force that gives rise to each existence or act. Innumerable seeds are stored in the eighth consciousness of each individual, and, when ripened, particular seeds produce their manifestations. The manifestations in turn leave their impressions in the eighth consciousness.

"Shuji" means that every individual himself or herself has the spiritual power and energy to from his or her own destiny. In other words, the actions one takes by mouth, mind, and heart will eventually

determine his or her future destiny and is recorded in the "Arayashiki".

For example, Professor Brian L. Weiss, renowned psychiatrist, used hypnosis to delve into people's lives of the past world and compared them with their present life. He says, "People who suffered in the past world have similar experience in this world. A woman married to a husband who resorted to violence in this world showed to have acted in a similar fashion in the past world. The alcoholics who ruined their lives in this world lived in a similar manner in the past world. Even after rebirth, people's lives show similar patterns in this world as those of the past. Professor Weiss introduced many such cases.

Professor Joel. L. Whitton's researches have also revealed that there are similarities in the way people live in their present lives and past lives. Professor Whitton is the author of the book entitled "Life Between Lif", and is a member of the Psychiatric Department of Toronto University. In Buddhism, these patterns are called Karma.

The most important aims of HBS are:

1. Eradication of one's bad Karma which has been sowed into the "Arayashiki " of the past world.
2. Guiding one into a better environment in order to build a good Karma in this present world to prepare them for the future world.

By chanting the Odaimoku and listening to it carefully the good seeds of Buddhahood will be sowed into the Arayashiki, and the bad Karma will be eradicated. Simultaneously, the pure power of Buddha contained in the Odaimoku will build you a better Karma which can be stored in the Arayashiki. In this manner, HBS's faith will purify the body and soul.

Kenji Miyazawa, a famous Japanese poet, writer and chemist, said, "To chant the Odaimoku appears to be old fashioned and superstitious, but no matter how much you research it or think about it, it is not so. If you meet a stumbling block have faith in it and chant the Odaimoku. This is a million time more realistic than the knowledge gained from my research."

Nichiren Shonin said, "Ambers draw dust. Magnets have the power to attract iron. The sins made in the past and present worlds are like the dust and the irons. The Odaimoku is the magnet and amber. The Odaimoku attracts our sinful inequities, and will rescue us from our deep sins. It is something to be thankful for. How can we refrain from chanting it?"

To learn more about HBS, get in contact with us and learn about it. Why don't you join us? We can practice the faith together.

2

The Characteristics of HBS

The teachings of the HBS are based on the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin's Teachings. HBS is referred to as a Nichiren related religious sect but, historically, it is a sect founded by Nissen Shonin (Nagamatsu Seifu) in the latter part of the Edo period (1857).

The consensus of Japanese Buddhist scholars is that Nissen Shonin revived Nichiren Shonin's spirit and the Lotus Sutra during the religious reform period that began in the latter part of the Edo period through the early part of the Meiji Era.

HBS strictly abides by the guiding principles set forth by Nissen Shonin's teachings (Goshinan, Gokyoka) in conducting their daily religious activities. An explanation will not be made in depth now as it is complicated and difficult to comprehend. Therefore, only several of Nissen Shonin's teachings will be enumerated.

Religion to attain nirvana

Meritorious acts and results or meritorious acts and comfort are the basic doctrines of Buddhism. A person who does not pursue religious practices called In (cause), will not be able to attain nirvana. The true intent of religious practices advocated by Nichiren Shonin and the Lotus Sutra teachings began to deteriorate gradually with the introduction of the Tokugawa fuedal goverment's Parishioner System about 400 years ago. This system was promulgated to suppress Christianity and to control and regulate religious practices. Affiliation to temples were based on the place of residence. The priests of temples were assured of a stable livelihood based on this system. Consequently, the priests lost their interest in teaching religion and focused their attention primarily to holding perfunctory services for the deceased and funeral related activities.

Nissen Shonin who revived the teachings of Nichiren Shonin and Nichiryu Shonin, who lived during the early part of the Muromachi Era (about 600 years ago), became deeply convinced that the Honmon Happon was a special teaching for the Mappo period. The Honmon Happon are the teaching of the 8 chapters (Chapters 15 through Chapters 22 of the Lotus Sutra). The Honmon Happon is the most important stance of HBS. That is to chant the Odaimoku by oneself and to spread it to others. Nissen Shonin, himself, chanted the Odaimoku and entered into the religion of the Hokkeshu (a Nichiren sect) founded by Nichiryu Shonin. Nissen Shonin later became a priest.

The Hokke sect of that time, however, like many other religious sects which took advantage of the parishioners system, had already lost their basic role of spreading the teaching of Buddhism. They merely attended to holding ceremonies for the deceased and funeral services to justify their existence. The priests believed that the deceased could attain Buddhahood vicariously through the rite held by reciting the Lotus Sutra.

Nissen Shonin said;"People can comfort the soul of the deceased, but to attain nirvana requires a different dimension. The belief that one can attain nirvana without direct contribution to Buddhist cause is in direct conflict with Nichiren Shonin's teachings and distorts the true principles of Buddhism", Nissen Shonin carried on his enlightenment activities despite the criticism of other priests who had relied on the parishioners system.

The controversy over the practice of religious services to attain nirvana was called "Kaiku Ronso" and "Sanzu Jofu Ronso". A difference in the beliefs caused Nissen Shonin to part from the Hokkeshu. The development of the event was discussed for many years. Among HBS's various teaching characteristics, conducting religious practices is a very important aspect to attain nirvana. In the words of Nissen Shonin, "One can recieve benefits through religious participation. Trying to receive benefits without conducting religious practices goes against the teaching of the Buddhas in the past, present and future", and "One can not take material goods with him to the other world. Gold and silver are not necessary in Jakko (In Buddhism, the land of the tranquil light, which means Heaven). Only our merits (virtues) can be taken with us".

Chanting only the Odaimoku

The basic practices of HBS is chanting the "Odaimoku".

Buddhist practices are achieved through the body, speech and mind. The use of the bodily organs to utter words, think and feel is also a practice. These are considered as behavioral actions.

From ancient times, the sutra of Hokekyo, the Lotus Sutra, was considered as "King of Sutras". It was revered by many people. However, there was a lack of uniformity in how the Lotus Sutra was practiced. This was because there were so many ways to pursue the body, mouth and mind practices contained in the Lotus Sutra. To roughly explain it, the practices were divided into two, one for the elite and the other for the commoners.

Nichiren Shonin, who came into being during the Kamakura Era (750 years ago), felt that people born in the Mappo period were mediocre individuals, lacking in the ability to practice religion. Therefore, he felt that more emphasis should be placed on a more simple task of practice by the mouth, the chanting of the Odaimoku, Namumyohorengekyo.

No matter what type of practice it may be, the aim of Buddhist practices is "Tenmei Kaigo" (to attain enlightenment), to wash away perplexities and impurities and to raise one's soul to the level of Buddha through meritorious acts.

This is known as "Kanjin" (introspection into one's mind—essence). Through repeated chanting of the Odaimoku merits of Kanjin will be recieved in the soul. HBS, which adheres to Nichiren Shonin's teachings, is a sect that engages in this practice.

Buddhism maintains that souls can be divided into three levels;the conscious mind, the Manashiki and the Arayashiki. The five senses are seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, and feeling. The conscious mind functions in unison with the five senses. The Manashiki is a deeper soul than the conscious mind. It is a subconscious mind that one cnnnot see. (Sigmund Freud's theory of the unconscious perhaps fits this category). Then, there is a deeper soul than Manashiki known as the Arayashiki. The Arayashiki stores and registers all that one experiences in his lifetime. Moreover, the Arayashiki, which is said to be the inheritance of karmas continues to exist even after death. The stored past experiences are carried into the future world.

The experiences and behaviours are referred as “shuji" (seeds) in Buddhism. The seeds stored in the Arayashiki have the function to shape one's destiny. In other words, these seeds can build one's destiny and function as a spiritually motivated energy.

At any rate, our behaviors by the body, speech, and mind become seeds which are sowed into the Arayashiki. Consequently, if one acts with malice or makes derogatory remarks, these polluted seeds are planted as bad seeds into the Arayashiki and they will function in shaping your destiny in a bad way. These bad seeds are called “zaisho" (sins). The aim of Buddhism is to prevent these sins from entering the soul and eradicate the sinful seeds planted in the Arayashiki. How can this be done? Other potent and powerful filtering seeds are needed for planting in the Arayashiki. Nichiren Shonin said, “Amber attracts dust, magnet draws iron. Our misdeeds are like the dust and iron. The Odaimoku is like the amber and magnet. Keep that in mind and chant “Namumyohorengekyo". Accomplishing meritorious acts and chanting of the Odaimoku are the methods to plant the powerful seeds required to eradicate the bad seeds.

Today, there are many Nichiren associated sects which do not chant the Odaimoku. They merely recite the Sutra. Among these sects, HBS is a sect which carries out the will (teachings) of Nichiren Shonin and chants the Odaimoku. Nichiren Shonin said, “When entering into the Mappo period, there is no need for other teachings and recitation of the Lotus Sutra. Only the chanting of Namumyohorengekyo is required. Do not mix other teachings with the Odaimoku. Also, reciting other teachings will not be tolerated".

Pure Religion

One of the essential characteristics of HBS is that it does not revere any other scriptures or images except mandalas with the Odaimoku.

As mentioned before, the Lotus Sutra is the most respected sutra. The first reason is, Shotoku Taishi, in the introduction of his book, wrote, “the sutra called the Lotus Sutra includes all goodness to attain enlightenment, and is a pasture of abundant crops to gain enlightenment and is a religious medicine that transforms life expectancy into eternal life":Shotoku Taishi continued,

“Shakyamuni Buddha appeared in this world to explain the Lotus Sutra to the people and give them a reason to acquire various goods for enlightenment. He wanted them to recieve a matchless re]igious merits.

As stated, the Lotus Sutra contains all of Buddha Shakyamuni's teachings. It unified and incorporated the sutras of others in which Buddhas, Bodhisattavas and guardian kings of heaven appear and elaborated on their basic teachings. Because the Lotus Sutra was such a consolidated and synthetic sutra, that its teachings could not stabilize it's goal and they began to take on a free and uninhibited form. If every Buddha were to be included, to the recitation of the name of Buddha Amida could be considered practicing the Lotus Sutra, and in the same way to revere the scripture of Kanzeon Bodhisattva is also the Lotus Sutra, to make a vow to Kishimojin is also considered the practice of the Lotus Sutra. This trend became a generally accepted idea from the Heian period.

Nichiren Shonin said;“Buddhas are children. The Lotus Sutra is the parent. Buddhas are the body. The Lotus Sutra is a soul" (Honzon Mondo Sho). “The Lotus Sutra is the parent. Buddhist body is created"(Jussho—sho). Therefore, revere the Odaimoku of the Lotus Sutra.

Since there are some technical words used above, an allegory is given below for clarification.

The Odaimoku mandala of the Lotus Sutra is like a large tree. Buddhas, future buddhas and others are the many parts that comprise the tree, like the branches and leaves. To display Buddhist images etc in front of the Odaimoku mandara and to pray is like breaking off the branches. Those branches which are broken from the tree will soon wither and die.

The scripture written by Nichiren Shonin contains the names of the various buddhas to the right and left of the Odaimoku mandala written in the center. Nichiren Shonin designated this mandala to be the

object of worship.

In compliance with the scripture of Nichiren Shonin, the Nichiren sects initially revered the Odaimoku mandala. As time passed, some Nichiren related sects diverged and began to display objects of guardian kings of heaven, such as Daikokuten, Kishimojin, Taishakuten and others. This led to the origination of different Nichiren religious sects.

Nissen Shonin, the founder of HBS, felt that those Nichiren sects were in direct conflict with the true intent of religion taught by Nichiren Shonin. He proposed that the only scripture to be revered was the Odaimoku mandala, and forbade his followers to worship other objects.

In view of Nissen Shonin's strict posture, HBS was denounced by other sects to be narrow—minded and too strict.

To those criticism, Nissen Shonin responded, "A faithful wife cannot look after two husbands. A worrior cannot serve two lords". The basic law contains thousands of laws, so HBS cannot have two objects of worship. The Lotus Sutra stated, `ashes are not of concern and there is no need to worship a cinerary urn'. Nichiren Shonin said, "I am not narrow minded. I am only faithful to the Lotus Sutra. The soul of Buddha is included in the Odaimoku. Uphold the Lotus Sutra and ignore the others. To shun the soul of the Lotus Sutra is to deprive one of recieving special favors".

Importance of manifest Evidence

Nichiren Shonin used three kind of evidences to judge the superiority of the law of Buddhism: reason (logical substantiation), scriptual evidence (documents of Buddhist teachings, and manifest evidence (proven evidence). He mainly emphasized the manifest evidence by stating that religious laws are not limited to reason or documents. Manifest evidence is more important than reasoning or documents.

Nissen Shonin wanted positive missionary work to be undertaken and by doing such work, manifest evidence can be seen in the forms of the sick being cured from an illness or the poor being freed from poverty.

Nissen Shonin's activities generated criticism from priests of other sects because they felt that his line of missionary work that advocated inexplicable phenomenon was inappropriate for the present world thinking. Nissen Shonin, however, replied, "There are many people who feel that there is no heaven or hell in this Mappo period. The intellectuals feel that to pray to God or Buddha are shameful and they do not feel the importance of afterlife. Therefore, if one can experience the phenomenon as a result of one's missionary work, then ordinary people may partake in religion in the future":Thus, Nissen Shonin continued to preach and emphasize the existence of inexplicable phenomenon which one can receive through fervent missionary work.

HBS advocates that through fervent praying and chanting of the Odaimoku, one can receive favorable results.

Bodhisattva practice:

Benefits as manifest evidence that one can recieve through chanting the Odaimoku are not the sole objective of HBS. As Nissen Shonin said;"The divine favor in this world is for the aspiration after enlightenment". As such, it is to become aware of the Odaimoku and the evidence of reality and take the opportunity to further deepen one's religious activities"

What then is higher level of the faith? Based on the Lotus Sutra. We should recommended it to others and its religious merits be shared with them. To help people through the Odaimoku is the true help. To engage in such activities is the path to attain Buddhahood.

The teaching characteristics and originality of HBS are:

1. Religion for nirvana.
2. Devoted wholly to chanting the Odaimoku.
3. True religion for purification.
4. Importance of receiving inexplicable benefits.
5. Individual participation in enlightenment activities.

The above teachings are also based upon the will and real intentions of Nichiren Shonin.

3

Shakyamuni Buddha, Odaimoku, and Gohonzon

The Eternal Buddha

The Shakyamuni Buddha was born approximately 2500 years ago, and preached the Lotus Sutra late in his later years. In the life—span of Tathagata (Buddha's life span is immeasurable, The Lotus Sutra, chapter 16), Buddha explains;people may think I reliquished my status as Prince, became a priest at age 19, and attained the state of enlightenment at 30, but my true form is the primordial Buddha in the remote past whose life is immortal.

The primordial session of the Lotus Sutra clarifies that Buddha Shakyamuni, who was embodied with eternal life, meaningful values, merits, and affection, will embrace the universe. In short, Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni is the life of the universe itself.

The Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni, who was to teach and guide all existing things, appeared in various places (lands) in the form of duplicate bodies as manifestations of his the original state. For example, Yakushi—nyorai (the Buddha of healing) and other Buddhas, which are the object of worship by other religious groups, are actually, duplicate bodies of Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni.

Nichiren Shonin said, "From eternity this world of ours is where the Buddha was responsible to aid the people. All things which exist in the vast univers, mountains, oceans, forests, grass lands etc., are the children of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni."

What then is the Odaimoku (The sacred title of the Lotus Sutra)? It is the eternal law, known by HBS as the Odaimoku. The Odaimoku and the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni are identical.

HBS members do not verbally read the Sutra (the Lotus Sutra) in front of the altar. They mainly chant the Odaimoku. Motivated by the Honmon Happon (eight chapters) of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Shonin only taught and had spread the vital points of the Odaimoku based on the Honmon Happon (primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra). The Lotus Sutra's 28 chapters are merely statements of virtues, and are like a list of benefits of a medical prescription only. The Odaimoku is the medicine itself. Medicine must be swollowed to be effective. Merely reading the Lotus Sutra is ineffective. One cannot receive religious merits and divine favors without chanting aloud the Odaimoku. For that reason, Nichiren Shonin said, "To cherish the Lotus Sutra is fine, but respect only the Odaimoku. To read aloud other teachings will not be tolerated." Nichiren Shonin emphasized the chanting of the Odaimoku only.

Nissen Shonin said,"Riciting the Lotus Sutra is now senseless. Only the Odaimoku is essential. People

who only read and recite the Lotus Sutra in this world are foolish as using the light in daytime. If one has the time to read and recite the Lotus Sutra, use it to chant the Odaimoku."

The reason for not displaying the figure of Shakyamuni Buddha

Q. Why is the figure of Shakamuni Buddha not displayed.
A. It is because HBS's object of worship is Namumyohorengekyo, the Odaimoku Manadala and not Sakyamuni Buddha.

Other Buddhist sects, such as the Jodo□shu, the Shingon□shu and the Tendai□shu may display statues of their respective Buddhas, such as Amida Buddha, Dainichi Buddha, or Yakushi Buddha because their object of worship is Buddha.

From that standpoint, let us think what type of a person Buddha was. The word Buddha in Sanskrit is "Buddha". which. transcribed into Chinese character or kanji, is also pronounced "Buddha". The meaning of Buddha is a "person who has attained enlightenment" or a "person who was awakened to the truth".

In Japan, Buddha is referred to as "The Awakened One" or "Wise One", who attained enlightenment or realized the fundamental truth of the universe and who transmitted to us the lesson by which one should live according to this truth.

Shakyamuni Buddha, who was born approximately 2600 years ago, based his object of worship on the eternal life of the universe (Myoho).

Other Buddhas became Buddhas also by awakening to the eternal life of the universe. Therefore, Myoho is more sacred, supreme, and respected than Buddha.In the Lotus Sutra, Shakyamuni Buddha stated, "There is no need to display the statue of Buddha or ashes of Buddha because the spirits of Buddha are enshrined in the Myoho (Fine Dharma)".

The Odaimoku Mandala inscribed by Nichiren Shonin is Myoho itself.

For reason mentioned above, one can comprehend why the statue of Shakyamuni Buddha is not displayed.

Q. Why does HBS display the form of Nichiren Shonin?

A. In Buddhism, a person possessing the following three power of merits is considered a great teacher:

1. The power to protect mankind (Like a great master).
2. The power to teach and guide mankind (Like a great teacher).
3. The power of love for mankind (Like a great parent).

HBS displays the statue of Nichiren Shonin out of respect because, in this period of Mappo, he was the greastest teacher who possessed the three power of merits to spread the teaching of the Lotus Sutra and the true law. We have been blessed by his teachings and, thereby, are able to receive the merits of the Lotus Sutras in this present world as well as in the future world.

The ways of writings Gohonzons

There are three largely different ways of writing Gohonzons (Scriptures). That is, "Ko", "Ryaku", and "Yo".

"Ko" is a form which has the names of Buddhas, future buddhas, and a host of sages (of the pure land) are to the right and left of the Odaimoku.

"Ryaku" has the names of the Eternal Buddha Shakyamuni and Taho-nyorai and the great four future

buddhas, Jogyo, Muhengyo, Jogyo (pronounced the same but with different kanji) and Anryurgyo.

"Yo" is a form with only the Odaimoku. There is no need to show it on the Scripture as all Buddhas and future buddhas are embodied in it.

The names shown on the right and left of the Odaimoku indicates that the future buddhas and sages are facing the Scripture and are chanting the Odaimoku.

Although there are three types of Scriptures, all of them are embodied with the soul of divinity so it makes no difference which type is used.

4

What are sins (Zaisyo)?

Amber collects dust. Magnet have the power to attract iron. Our bad deeds are like dust and iron. The Odaimoku of the Lotus Sutra is like amber and magnet. Think about it and constantly chant the Odaimoku.

(Hokke Daimoku Syo)

When priests or believers of Honmon Butsuryu Shu (HBS) face the Odaimoku Mandala to commence praying, they first chant, "Eliminate the sins and hindrances that I have accumulated by disparaging the Dharma since the beginningless past" (Mushiirai Hobo Zaisho Shometsu etc.- the Penitence Formula). The prayers are presented and the chanting of the Odaimoku commences.

At the close of the praying session, the Formula of Penitence is once again chanted.

The chanting of the Formula of Penitence is requesting the power of the Odaimoku to eradicate our sins, which we have accumulated during the cycles of death and rebirth. It is the phrase of repentance.

"What are the sins accumulated in the past world? What have I done to cause sins?". These thoughts may run through your mind as you may consider yourself not to be a sinful person. Buddhist teachings concerning eradication of sins stipulates that if one does not have a soul of reflection, a soul to yield, or a soul of thoughtfulness, a kind soul will not be born. A strong soul of self-righteousness creates problems.

In order that people can live in peace and harmony, HBS emphasizes that one should reassess themselves at times. The significance of reciting the Formula of Penitence is to remind one not to forget the soul of reflection (to look back at what good or bad things they have done) and to have a humble soul.

Explanation of sins by Buddhism

The meaning of sins between Buddhism and the general public differs. The general public's explanation of sins refers to crimes committed against the law of the country, such as stealing or killing people. Buddhist explanation of sins are actions (behaviour) committed by body, mouth and mind. Even if one did not kill a person, to tell someone that "I would like to kill so and so", or to think in one's mind that "I hope so and so would be seriously injured in a traffic accident" are all considered sins. Even contemplating suicide is a sin.

To harbour evil thoughts is regarded as accumulations of sins. Calmly and unassumingly inspect your soul. How many people have you detested and thought ill of or been jealous of in your daily life? Or you may have thought about your own selfish benefits. These actions are all considered sins.

Why is just thinking about things in your mind considered sins?

It is because there is a deep subconscious soul called Arayashiki, which has the power to store everything one did, thought and said. Those actions become seeds, which are stored in the Arayashiki. These seeds become the spiritual energy that builds your destiny. Let's say, you cursed someone. That curse becomes a bad seed and is instantly sowed into the Arayashiki. That bad seed will grow into an energy which will affect one's destiny in a bad way. Let's say, you ridiculed someone within your mind. That act becomes a bad seed, which is planted in the Arayashiki, and you will someday be ridiculed by someone. Moreover, the seeds planted in the Arayashiki will continue to live even after the body ceases to exist. In short, the Arayashiki is the core of birth and death. You carry within your soul the bad seeds which were accumulated from the past world.

How can the bad seeds be eradicated?

In America and Canada, hypnosis is being presently used to delve into one's past world. Some clients undergoing this treatment cried after seeing their past sinful acts, thought and speech. The bad seeds imbedded in the soul cause various misfortunes and calamities. These are called "sins". As long as the sins are kept in the Arayashiki, misfortunes and calamities will befall to us at any time. Unless the bad seeds are filtered and eradicated, true happiness and peace cannot be attained.

"Amber collects dust, magnet draws iron". By chanting Namumyohorengekyo repeatedly the seeds possessing the energy of the Eternal Buddha will be sowed into the Arayashiki, and the bad seeds will be filtered and eradicated." said Nichiren Shonin.

In a separate writing, Nichiren Shonin said, "There is no sin which cannot be eradicated by chanting the Odaimoku. That is the truth. Accept it."

The worst of all sins is the one violating the law of the universe and the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. This will be explained in more detail at a later date.

5

Inviting Happiness

In Buddhism, there are teachings on "Inga" (cause and effect). "Innen" (cause and condition) and "Engi" (dependent origination). These three words have one thing in common. Everything in these words is interdependent and is mutually inclusive. There is a correlation between matters that are constantly affecting and influencing one another. A Buddhist theory expresses this concept in various phrases, "Shiki-sokuzeku" (form or matter is non-substantive), "Shoho-muga" (phenomena are in existence by condition, thus, they have no substance) and "Shogyo-mujyo" (All things are impermanent. One of the three truths in Buddhism. It means that everything is constantly changing). Buddhidism expressed that "Everything has an organic influential effect". This simply means that we, the people, are all connected to one another by invisible strings. The basic foundation of the HBS's teaching premised on "Ichinen-sanzen" clarifies and explains the aforementioned phrases. A Buddhist dictionary defines "Ichinen-sanzen" as the three thousand realms contained in one mind. That all phenomena in this world or "Sanzen" are all included in the one thought or "Ichinen" that human beings have in their daily lives.

The theory of "Ichinen-sanzen" has many similar ideologies to those contained in the "Principles of Cause and Effect (Innen)" as expressed by the European scholar Carl Jung (1875-1961). Jung was a founder of analytical psychology, and in his work, he uses the term "synchronicity". The meaning of this word is "meaningful cause and condition". Jung further defined it as "there is no internal connection in cause and effect, but harmony and unity exist". In other words, events which seem like a mere coincidence have a hidden internal cause and effect connection. It is said that a coincidence is not just a coincidence, but a "meaningful coincidence".

Allen Boone of the U.S.A. is currently conducting a research on the principle of synchronicity. Boone asserts that "coincidences are not a mere occurrence that happen arbitrarily but that our conscious mind wills them to occur at times. The conscious is creating space, time and substanc....the correspondence of coincidence is, indeed, the product of consciousness. Each and every consciousness possesses knowledge of the entire consciousness". In essence, information of all human functions is contained in each cell within the body, every individual possesses the information of the universe.

As one can see, there are many similarities between the Buddhist theory of "Ichinen-sanzen" and Jung and Boone's theories on synchronicity and analytic psychology.

As an illustration of this theory, I would like to tell a story of my acquaintance.

Mr. Asakura was the second son born to a priest of a temple in Northern Japan. Because he had no desire to become a priest, he decided to pursue a career in business and he purposely found an

employment in Osaka City far away from his parents' home. Upon arrival, he had to look for a place to live. After many searches, he finally found a place to his liking. To his surprise, however, the house was owned by a parishioner of HBS. He made the decision to rent the place not knowing how this one event would change the course of his destiny forever.

Upon his arrival, the landlady woke him up early in one morning to go to her temple to worship. She insisted that he join the temple's youth club. As time passed Mr. Asakura's involvement with the temple and other related services increased. This change in his life-style ultimately influenced him to study Buddhism. He, later, met Reverend Takasu of the Chokunji Temple in Kumamoto Prefecture and served under his guidance. Mr. Asakura is now a priest of Chokunji Temple. Rev. Asakura said. "If it had not been for the landlady who was an earnest follower of HBS, I would not have become a priest".

It is not so. Rev. Asakura had karma (cause and condition) which ultimately led to the course of events described above.

While completing the draft of this essay regarding Mr. Asakura, I was informed by my wife that a letter had just arrived. The letter was from Rev. Asakura whom I had not heard from for over five years. This coincidence may be described as synchronicity.

The micro world and macro world

I would like to emphasize the concept of "Ichinen-sanzen". "Ichinen-sanzen" is a cause and effect factor. What appear to be irrelevant occurrences have an internal connection or harmony. The purpose here is not to explain scientifically the theory of "Ichinen-sanzen" but to delineate the ways to bring happiness.

"Ichinen-sanzen" means everything that exist in the universe influence one another. The activities are also interdependent.

For example, the functions of the organs, muscles, tendons, etc., are all interrelated in the way one function and supports the others. Many life forms have a symbolic relationship with other organisms.

In my congregation, there is a parishioner named Reizo lwasaki. He is a doctor of internal medicine. I received a letter from him a few years ago in which he cites an event he experienced while conducting a research at the University of Osaka Hospital.

"It was around 1961 when I spent many sleepless nights preparing my slides and manuscripts for the World Symposium of Digestive Organ Diseases and the Japan Digestive Deseases Symposium. The theme of my research paper was "Research on Figuration of the Bile Secretion Mechanism" and the research was conducted by the use of an electron microscope. Through these researches, I have gained a better understanding of how every form of life, no matter how small it may be, contributes to the universe, and of the symbolic relationship that exists between the micro and macro worlds are seen in nature".

In short, all phenomena that occur in the universe have a reason and purpose. Consequently, there is a connection and association between all things in the universe.

6

Mentalism Preached by Buddhism

We have previously discussed the theory of “Icinen-sanzen". Along the same principle, there is another theory called the “mentality theory". This theory outlines how we can invite good fortunes and happiness in our lives.

In Buddhism, the five senses which aid our body to see, to hear, to smell, to taste and to feel, are referred to as “Gokan". In conjunction with the “gokan", the ability to distinguish one thing from another and judge it intuitively is known as the sixth sense.

Buddism explains that in the sixth sense exist the seventh and the eighth senses called “Manashiki" and “Arayashiki", respectively. The explanation of these senses are as follows:

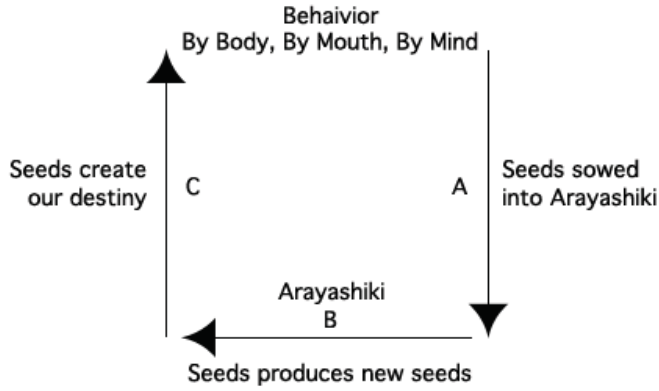
The warehouse of mind, (Arayashiki)

The “raya" in Arayashiki means “storage". The crowning of the word with an “A" changes the meaning to “keep in storage". In other words, the mind is where the information is being stored.

What is stored in the “Arayashiki"? The entire history of one's life; that is all that we have seen, heared, read, said, thought and done in one's entire lifetime are stored in the Arayashiki. As mere mortals, it is almost impossible to remember all the things we do or hear in our daily lives. In fact, most of the infomation is forgotten almost instantly. What is normally retained in the memory bank is only what truly impressed us at times. But within the Arayashiki, all of the life experiences conducted with one's body, speech and mind are recorded and stored in detail.

Arayashiki is a manufacturing mechanism of destiny

What is interesting about Arayashiki is that it is comprised of three functional faculties. Look at the diagram below:



Arrow A: All of our behavior and thoughts are sowed into the Arayashiki. This process is known as "Gengyo kunshuji" "Gengyo" refers to all our daily activities and "kunsyuji" refers to the sowing of the seeds. In short, the seeds symbolize our deeds and those deeds are deeply planted into the Arayashiki.

Arrow B: These seeds will shape the character of a person. It becomes the energy to change one's destiny and will continue to function endlessly. This is known as "Shuji sho shuji".

Arrow C: The subconscious energy within the Arayashiki aids the growth of the seeds in awakening the unconscious and conscious minds. This process in turn influences our destiny. This is said to be "Shuji sho gengyo".

In this manner, our actions performed by the body, speech and the mind, which have a close affiliation with the Arayashiki, work in concert with one another creating a relationship of cause and effect.

Therefore, to think and hold grudges about a trifling event or an act will result in the sowing of a sinful seed in the Arayashiki. Negative behavior and thoughts will then reapper in one's daily life only to be counterproductive. If one does and think of good deeds, the good seeds, sowed in the Arayashiki, will provide good fortune.

In the preceding section, I have explained the theory of "Ichinen-sanzen", which stated that all thing are interrelated. And now, we learned that all of one's actions and thoughts are stored in the Arayashiki. What can be done to seek the best from all that is interrelated? What can be done to store good seeds in the Arayashiki in order to bring about good fortune?

The Arayashiki that exists deep within one's conscience will bring about good fortune if one learns to operate and control one's behavior in a proper manner. In other words, it depends on how you control your life in order that only the good seeds will be stored in the Arayashiki.

What then are good and bad seeds compriesd of? What can be done to sow good seeds into the Arayashiki and what is considerd important? Let us learn from the Buddhist doctrines and from the teachings of the great, past masters of Buddhism.

7

The Lotus Sutra and Genetic Engineering

The Second Chapter of the Lotus Sutra, "Expedient" (Hoben-pon) states, "Within the pure land of ten directions, only One Vehicle Dharma exists. The one Vehicle Dharma expounds the methods of attaining enlightenment for all sentient beings.

What is the Law of One Vehicle Dharma that Shakyamuni Buddha acknowledged?

This profound and wonderful law is difficult to understand and is inexplicable in words. However, if the law had not been explained, the world of enlightenment experienced by Shakyamuni Buddha would have remained a secret within his own heart. Thus, the Lotus Sutra employed various parables to explain to the people, the law of the One Vehicle and the teachings of Buddha in order to arouse their vision and sensitivity. In essence, it means a) every existence possesses enormous genetic data within, b) all living beings are supported by a large original life and c) the fundamental existence of the universe is called the "Wonderful Law of Buddha (Myoho) or the "Eternal Buddha (Kuon Honbutsu)."

Information Contained Within The Genes:

Dr. Kazuo Murakami, a professor of genetic engineering at Tsukuba University, authored a book on genetics called, "A Message on Life Something Great". The book expounds on an interesting theory which closely parallels the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

A living matter, whether it be a human being, an animal or a plant, is comprised of cells in large numbers. A cell is approximately 1/500,000th millimeters in size and weighs 1/200,000,000 of gram. A life begins with a single cell within a mother's womb. Upon fertilization, the cell begins to divide continuously until the complete formation of the organs and the body parts are achieved. Each of the cells within the body contains a DNA-a genetic code that serves as a map of the traits inherited from the parents. The DNA is comprised of a chain of chromosomes that are arranged neatly and systematically. These chromosomes contain specific genetic codes that determine the color of our eyes, hair, etc.

Professor Murakami enumerated that the decoding of genetic cryptograms have been much simplified by the use of computers. It is believed that the entire genetic system will be clarified within the early part of the 21st century. While scientists have been successful in decoding the cryptogram, its origin and how it was created is still unanswered. Taking a strand of DNA, for example, the chemical characteristics are individually matched and systematically arranged.

What was its origin and how was it created? Professor Murakami surmises that there is an existence of "Something Great" in the universe that was responsible for its creation. He states that he does not know what this great existence is, but, one cannot accept, as a matter of fact, the blueprint of life and functions that are contained in the microscopic cells. He also adds that, "I have thought about this and we must not forget that human beings are being kept alive by a power in the huge universe."

What is this Something Great?

Through reading the book authored by Prof. Murakami, I am reminded of the theories of "The ten realms - from hell to the buddha realm - containing in itself the other nine realms" (Jikkai Gogu), and the "3000 existences contained in one thought" (Ichinen-sanzen), which were written by the Great Master Tendai, about 1400 years ago, based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

Today, science researchers, who are working on genetics, are beginning to confirm what had been said in the teachings of Buddhism and the doctrines written by Great Master Tendai and Nichiren Shonin.

Nichiren Shonin stated in his doctrine, "Sozai Ichinen Sho" (Everything contained in one thought), that everything is sowed into the eighth consciousness, Arayashiki. (Showa Teihon, page 80). It is claimed that information on all existence is deposited into the Arayashiki. The recent developments on heredity introduced by prominent research scientists are similar to what Buddhism had expounded many years ago.

"I often get a strange feeling when I read about a new information on heredity. It always poses a question as to who created this exquisite blueprint?" It can only be said to be a phenomenon beyond man's capabilities. If this is the case, then we must assume that it is a work of a being beyond man. From this view point, I refer to such existence as "A Great Somebody" or "Something Great".

Professor Murakami's reference to the "Something Great" is surely what the Lotus Sutra expounded as the "One Vehicle Dharma" (Ichijo Myoho), and is one example of the energy of the Eternal Buddha.

Let me continue with the professor's dissertation

"At the present time, much information regarding life has been obtained by scientists. Yet, scientists, with even with a vast amount of knowledge, information and resources, have not been able to recreate a simple organism, such as the colitis germ. We have been given a magnificent gift from the "Something Great".

We take for granted the gift of life that is given to us. Instead of expressing appreciation and gratitude, we tend to complain about every triviality of our daily life. I personally have a strong appreciation for the exquisite life as a human being, which was given to us by the "Something Great".

Since our life, as it exists today, would not have been possible if it were not for our parents, their parents, and their grandparents, etc., showing apppreciation to them also means we are expressing our gratitude to our ancestors. It is also important to realize that we are being kept alive by a larger existence incomprehensible to the human being. I am beginning to realize that the "Something Great" exists.

Shakyamuni Buddha manifested that "there is a huge existence excelling mankind".

This occurence is now being proclaimed by genetic engineers. However, the huge existence excelling mankind cannot be comprehended by the mind, nor can it be explained with words, said Shakyamuni Buddha. Even if it could, it is insignificant from the viewpoint of Buddhism. What is important is how we interact with the fundamental life, known as the One Vehicle Dharma or the Eternal Buddha. Nichiren Shonin taught us how we can relate to the essential eight chapters of Honmon (Chappters 15-22) of the Lotus Sutra.

Nichiren Shonin stated in the "Ishin Dai-e" that we should refrain from using our shallow wisdom.

Only revere the Fine Dharma (the Odaimoku) and without sparing the voice, repeatedly chant. Namumyohorengekyo, Namumyohorengekyo.

This is the most important path one can take to relate self to the great life and is the only method whereby the power of the "Wonderous Law" of Buddha can be instilled in our body and soul.

Let us, dilligently chant the Odaimoku together and plant the seeds of the religious merits into our heredity genes and store them in the Arayashiki for the benefit of the next generation.

Nichiren Shonin stated:"For those who are incapable of understanding the truth of the `3,000 existences contained in one thought', Lord Shakyamuni Buddha, with His great compassion, wraps this jewel with the five characters of myo, ho, ren, ge, kyo and hang it around the neck of the ignorant in the Latter Age of the Decadent Dharma." (A Treatise on the Spiritual Contemplation and the Object of Worship) (Kanjin Honzon Sho).

Nissen Shonin stated:"The Law of the Universe", which Shakyamuni Buddha was enlightened to, cannot be defined with words. If that is possible, it would not be considered to be a wonder or a mystery."

8

Correct Oneself by Analyzing Oneself

Great Master Nichiren stated;"The World of the Sacred Pure Land of the Tranquil Light and the repulsive World of Hell are not separate existences. They exist in one's soul. Shakyamuni Buddha was aware of the two worlds, but, we, ordinary people, do not care to understand it. However, by endeavoring in the religion of the Lotus Sutra, one can naturally understand that there are the two worlds, and will find in their mind, a spiritual relief to lead a peaceful life.
(Great Master Nichiren's teachings)

Four kinds of sufferings and eight kinds of pains of life (Shiku Hakku) (Mental Afflictions)

Shakyamuni Buddha elucidated that we cannot avoid encountering the fundamental four kinds of sufferings and eight kinds of pains during our lifetime.

The Four Types of Sufferings are:1). birth. 2). aging. 3). sickness, and 4). death:

The Eight Types of Pains are:1). the pain accompanying one's birth. 2). the pain of getting old. 3). the pain of illness. 4). the pain of death. 5). the pain of separating from those one loves. 6). the pain of meeting those one hates 7). the pain of not getting what one seeks, and 8) the pain accompanying the growth of one's mind and body.

The first sufferings we face are the Four Kinds of Sufferings—birth, old age, sickness and death.—Additionally, are the 8 pains.

A true religion

Shakyamuni Buddha, after expounding the fundamental Four Kinds of Suffering and Eight Kinds of Pain, explained how one can overcome those difficulties:Those teachings are divided into eight categories, known as "Hasshodo" (The Eight fold the Noble Path. It is so called because it leads to nirvana (complete enlightenment). They are:1). right views. 2). right thoughts. 3). right speech. 4) right acts. 5) right living. 6) right effort. 7) right mindfulness or recollection. 8) right meditation.

What is the "Right View"?

Shakyamuni Buddha stated:"First of all, analyze yourself and your consciousness".

We think we know ourselves, but, there is a proverb that says, "We can observe an inch of other personalities, but we cannot see a foot of ourselves". We can see someone else's shortcomings and weaknesses, but are blind when it comes to our own.

Philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623—1662) of France, in his book "Panse" (phonetic spelling) wrote:

"A true religion must definitely teach that there is an element of greatness and pitiable factors in men. A true religion must be able to explain the reasons for the astonishing inconsistencies."

Shakyamuni Buddha's teaching, namely Buddhism, from that standpoint is a true religion. It thoroughly examined men's element of greatness, nobleness, foolishness, ugliness, and it preached what path men should take to live peacefully.

Incidentally, psychologist Sigmund Freud, who was active during the latter half of the 19th Century, stated that men's consciousness of self/ego is truly like an iceberg. The submerged portion is larger than the part above the surface of the sea. Likewise, in men's soul, there is an existence of an unconscious mind. It has been verified by various instances that the power of an unconscious soul have a far greater influence on men's movements than that of a conscious mind.

About the same time as Sigmund Freud, a Swiss psychologist Carl Yung researched man's soul and discovered a depth psychology of ancient (past experiences) consciousness or so—called collective consciousness. A similar nature of the theories by the two psychologists is expounded in Buddhism. In recent years, European and American psychologists have taken notice of "Buddhist Psychology" and have begun to take interest in it.

The "World of Consciousness" from the standpoint of Buddhism?

First of all, there are five kinds of consciousness in men. They are:1).Visual consciousness. 2).Auditory consciousness. 3).Olfactory consciousness. 4). Gustatory consciousness. 5).Tactile consciousness. After them, comes the 6th consciousness — the mental consciousness. The six types of consciousness in Buddhism are referred to as "Rokushiki". Deep within the six types of consciousness is the soul called the World of Unconsciousness. It is separated into three stages known as the 7th Ego consciousness (Manashiki), the function of which is to perceive the subjective portion of the eight types of consciousness. It is erroneously regarded as one's ego, thereby creating ego—attachment. The 8th Alaya—consciousness (Arayashiki), the foundation consciousness of one's existence, stores all potential energy for the mental and physical manifestation of one's existence. And the 9th is Buddha nature consciousness.

Detailed explanation on the various consciousness will be omitted, but it should be noted that in the world of men's unconsciousness, various good, bad, pure, impure energetic souls are included. Since these souls are emitted at random from one's own will (unconsciousness), it is difficult to deal with it. It is often said, "He must have been possessed by an evil spirit". "Why did such a nice person do those terrible things?" These words are generally directed at criminals when they were known to be normal persons.

These comments are actions of the unconscious mind.

Devil spirits are actually embodied deep within the unconscious mind that one is unaware of. When its emotions break open at times, it changes one's actions. Therefore, there is no other more dangerous and unreliable existence such as men. No matter how one wants to step on the brakes, it, at times, rebels.

9

Humans Possess Six Souls

Existence of a World of Hell is doubtful,
but evil spirits exist in one's soul.

(Nissen Shonin's Instructive Poem)

Explanation: Men's soul is possessed with a tendency to act in brutal, cruel and unjust ways. These souls create sufferings like those of Hell when in motion. Thus, to debate whether Hell exists or not is meaningless.

The ten realms of a soul

The Ten Realms in a living being from the standpoint of Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings are as follows:

By the way, do you believe in Hell? Nine out of ten people say it is a world of imagination. Believing in it is superstition.

However, Hell exists. Then, where is it located? It exists in one's soul and not underneath the terra firma. The opposite pole from Hell is the Land of Tranquil Light. Then again, the Buddhas in the Land of Tranquil Light are living within one's soul. Buddhism elucidated that within our soul exists the ten realms; from the highest, the World of Buddha, to the lowest, the World of Hell. They are: 1) Hell. 2) Hungry Spirits. 3) Animals). 4) Asuras. 5) Men. 6) Heavenly beings. 7) Disciples. 8) Self enlightened Buddha. 9) Budhisattva. 10) Buddhas.

Let's begin with an explanation from the Hungry Spirits (Gaki). The Chinese Kanji character "Gaki" is written as "Eating" and "Self". The Hungry Spirit is always hunting for food. This soul is harbored within ourselves. This hungry spirit is not just walking around to find food, but is also seeking ways to make money. No matter how much money one has, they want more. In the course of attempting to accumulate money, they are not mindful of others. This type can be considered as people that fall into the realm of hungry spirit.

Below the Realm of Hungry Spirit is the Realm of Hell. While in the Realm of Hungry Spirit there is

freedom, in the Realm of Hell there is no escaping from suffering.

In pursuit of financial gains, one may fall into the monetary hell by borrowing money from a loan company to pay off their debts. Men paying alimony as result of fickleness are in the realm of fickleness hell. Other examples of hell are traffic accidents, studying studiously for an entrance examination into a top—notched school, vying for success in life, and war. The sources of these existences in this world are initiated from the soul.

Referring to the hell of war, the people of Nagasaki and Hiroshima Cities experienced hell from the atom bomb. Presently, there are people in various parts of the world who are experiencing suffering from the aftermath of war.

Rebirth in the six worlds

Above the World of Hungry Spirits is the World of Animals. The general public thinks the World of Animals are dogs, cats or other animals. But, beasts are merely storing life. For example, if man's rationality becomes devoid or morality benumbed, it will be exposed to an instinct similar to that of a beast.

The World of Asuras is a soul of quarrel, envy or antagonism. Men will usually fall into this realm several times a day by displaying one of those souls.

The fifth world is the World of Men. It is a soul of confrontation — coping/dealing with the reality of things.

Above it is the World of Heavenly Beings. It is believed that when one's soul is excited from pleasures, it will climb into the World of Heavenly Beings. The sense of elation can be experienced during an event such as marriage and/or a honeymoon. But, when arguments prevail they will fall into the World of Asuras.

The Worlds of Hell, Hungry Spirits, and Animals are referred to as the three lowest states of existences. All existences in this world will be born, then die, and transmigrate between the six realms (Rokudo Rinne). We, not only, transmigrate from the past life into the future life, we also transmigrate within the six worlds on a daily basis. Thus, Buddhism maintains that the sins and iniquities are created by the six realms.

The reason why Shakyamuni Buddha's said, "First, look into your soul carefully" is so we can be cognizant of the despicable and ugly evils hidden within the Six Realms. One should offer repentance (confession) of past evil acts before the Gohonzon. The only true way to enter into the religion of the Lotus Sutra is to offer repentance (confession) before the Gohonzon for your past evils.

The starting point of religion is to reflect upon the souls of the six realms and to offer repentance to the Gohonzon.

10

Starting Point of The HBS Religion

There are many fools who are unaware of themselves,
but will notice the other fools and the wise of this world.

(Nissen Shonin's Instructive Poem)

Explanation: There are people who constantly assess others, but when it comes to themselves, they are blind. There are many such fools in this world.

Possess a soul of a bodhisattva as master:

Other than the “Souls of the Six Worlds" that one possesses, there are an additional four elegant and noble Worlds known as the “Four Kinds of Sages" (Shiso). They are: 1) Disciple (Shomon) 2) A Self—enlightened Buddha (Engaku). 3) A Future Buddha (Bodhisattava) and 4) Buddha.

Following is brief explanation of:

- The World of Disciple:
  It means, “Listen to Sermons". It is a mind that seeks teachings or a master to aid in polishing one's personal character and intellect.
- The World of a Self—enlightened Buddha:
  This is “Learning from Relationships". It is a mind to measure one's efforts to improve them through seeing, hearing and experiencing affairs that surround them. It is also known as “Self—learning"(Dokugaku).
- The World of Bodhisattva:
  The World of Bodhisattva is not merely to improve oneself. It is also an effort to provide good fortune to others. It is a soul to turn one's effort to others through their powers of knowledge and motivation.
- World of Buddha:
  The stage of Buddha is a mind to see things straightforwardly and equally, and not be led astray

through preconception or self—interest.

The above are the souls possessed by men, but the souls of Shomon and Engaku are minds to improve only one—self. They have no room to turn their attention to others. As such, they are souls of self—interest only.

In the Large Vehicle Buddhism, Shomon and Engaku have been criticized to be self—centered, having no motivation to save mankind. The people that remained in the Worlds of Shomon and Engaku are known to be "Two Vehicle Natured". The consistent teaching of Mahayana Buddhism is that one's soul should possess as its master, the soul of Bodhisattva rather than that of the Shomon and Engaku.

The HBS Sect that bases its teaching on the Lotus Sutra elucidates that "The Odaimoku should be chanted not only by one—self but be spread to others". It condemns Hinayana Buddhism.

The soul that creates society

By the way, in Europe and China that entertain the fundamental position of Christian doctrine and philosophy, various philosophers and religionists have debated whether humans had descended from wolves or sheep. In other words, whether men's true character is "good" or "bad". Buddhism's view on human nature is not pro—goodness or pro—badness. No matter how good a person may be, he/she possesses the souls of Hell, Animals and Asuras. And, within a person who is labeled as an atrociously bad person, dwells the souls of Bodhisattva and Buddha. This is the fundamental position of Shakyamuni Buddha regarding humanism.

A human being is like a thermostat. Depending on its environmental positioning, it can rise to the World of Buddha or fall into the Worlds of Hell or Hungry Spirits.

It is easy for us, commoners, to place them in a bad environment. Thus, it is difficult to rise but easy to lower oneself.

To claim that this world is full of evil or suffering stems from an individual's mind. Therefore, to make this world a peaceful and better place to live in, Shakyamuni Buddha cited the "Eight—fold Noble Path" (Hasshodo). Those paths are: 1) Correct view, which refers to a correct understanding of the basic concept in Buddhism that explains the cause of suffering. 2) Correct thinking. 3) Correct speech, i.e. false statement. 4) Correct action. 5) Correct livelihood. 6) Correct endeavor. 7) Correct memory i.e. memory of things beneficial to enlightenment. 8) Correct meditation.

To understand one-self

When analyzing one's soul, it is important to remember the Six Worlds in which the souls of living beings transmigrate from one to another. Most people do not want to admit that the Worlds of hell, animals, and hungry spirits are possessed in one's soul. However, it is important to gaze, with courage, deep into our soul where the concealed evil spirits lie. In this world, feelings of greed and hatred are prevalent among men. To be aware of them is the true starting point for a person to enter into religion of the Lotus Sutra.

Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings are like the rays that shine in the many worlds hidden within our soul. It is often said that religion is to secure a soul of environmental spiritual peace. But, unless one is able to understand that men are full of sins and far from being a Bodhisattva or Buddha, entering a religion is difficult.

People should become aware of the Six Worlds and realize that they are sinful people by nature. Without a sense of penance by listening to Buddha's teachings, true salvation cannot be attained.

To engage in the true religion of HBS, let us not be "A fool who ise unaware of oneself", but "A wise

one who knows oneself".

11

Enlightenment

The ten worlds possessed in the mind

Q: What are the Stages of Enlightenment and the Stages of Attaining Buddhahood? Can we obtain them?

A: There are various interpretaions and explanations about the Stages of Enlightenment and Buddhahood depending on various Buddhist sects but HBS is a sect that carries out faithfully the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shonin.

Nichiren Shonin elucidated that Buddhahood can only be attained through the principle of the "Three Thousand Existences that are Contained in a One Thought of Each Individual (Ichinen Sanzen)". "One thought (Moment) (Concentration) embodies all elements within the universe. The Lotus Sutra maintains that all phenomena in this world are contained in a single thought of each individual. By consolidating the principles of "Ichinen Sanzen" , it can be concluded that the Lotus Sutra proclaimed a unique theory that each of the ten realms' of living beings-(1) hell, (2) hungry spirits, (3) animals, (4) asuras, (5) human beings (6) heavenly beings, (7) disciples, (8) self-enlightened Buddha, (9) bodhisattvas. (10) Buddha-are mutually inclusive and contained in one another. It is a thinkmg that within a soul of a human being lies the other nine realms. Even within the pure and noble soul of Shakyamuui Buddha, the ugly realms of hell and hungry spirits lie therein. On the other hand within the soul of wicked and malicious persons, the realms of Buddha and bodhisattvas are also contained therein.

The realm of Buddha. The realm of an ordinary person:

The condition of the ten realms contained in the mind of an ordinary person is arranged in parallel rows and they cannot influence or control one another. The type of environment or indirect causes we place ourselves in determines the realm to be awakened. Depending on the situation, it could be easily the realm of bodhisattva or the realm of hungry spirits.

For example, a student who was influenced by his extremely remarkable teacher chooses to take a path of education. That student, through his/her affiliation, was awakened to the world of learning and

practice. On the other hand, children who fool-heartedly feud over the parent's inheritance will rest assuredly have the realm of Asuras or hungry spirits in their soul as their master.

Within the soul of a person like Shakyamuni Buddha, the realms of bodhisattva and Buddha serve as the nucleus. They can be orderly controlled and will not function independently. That condition of the mind is the stage of attaining Buddhahood. The ten realms of the mind of an ordinary person are arranged in parallel rows and they can be rearranged only through religious practices.

Practices for attaining the stage of buddhahood

The Lotus Sutra elucidated that to attain the stage of Buddhahood there are two types' of practices:(1) A person of faculty and talent should spend their time engaging in religious practices. (2) There are easier methods of practices for ordinaly people.

Nichiren Shonin was extremely interested in learning the sutra that elucidated the very core of Shakyamuni Buddha's teachings at a very young age. He visited many temples researching and studying various sutras ultimately concluding that the Lotus Sutra was superior to all other sutras of Buddhism. He also concluded that among the 28 Chapters of the Lotus Sutra the primordial eight chapters, Chapter 15 to 22, were the most important teachings for the salvation of mankind in the last period of the Decadent Dharma (The Mappo Period).

The people of the Mappo Period will be able to attain the merits of Buddhahood through practices of the teachings outlined in the primordial chapters. What are the teachings and practices expounded in these chapters for the common people? Nichiren Shonin elucidated the following in his treatise, "The Four Stages of Faith and Five Stages of Practice" the following:

> *The Buddha restricts the two laws; practicing precepts and meditation. All emphasis should be placed upon the single factor of wisdom, but because our wisdom is inadequate, Buddha taught us to substitute faith for wisdom, making this single word, `faith', the foundation.*

Nichiren Shonin also stated:

> *Embrace only the Lotus Sutra wholeheartedly. It means that one should embrace the Odaimoku of the sutra exclusively and not mix it with other passages. Even recitation of the entire sutra is not permitted.*

Clarification:A beginner who engages in diffierent types of religious practices may bring about more demerits than merits. One should not use the mind to seek enlightenment, but to chant with joy, Namumyohorengekyo, the secret words that wrap all merits of the Buddha. By upholding and chanting the Odaimoku with the feeling of joy, one is taking part in preserving the precepts based on the power of the Eternal Buddha and not by the power of oneself. This is the true method to practice the religion. There is no need to recite the sutra. Nichiren Shonin also mentioned that this religion is not only for the Mappo Period, but for all periods and no matter what type of practitioners they may be they will return to the fundamental practices of the primordial eight chapters.

Nichiren Shonin based his conclusion from the following factors:

The figure of the Gohonzon:

Buddhism was born in India about 2600 years ago with the appearance of Shakyamuni Buddha, who preached his teachings in general terms for approximately 50 years. Among the various teachings of

Shakyamuni Buddha, the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Stitra contained a special meaning. He revealed that:"I did not attain enlightenment as an ordinary human being, but my true original form is the Fundamental Eternal Buddha that attained enlightenment in the remotest past and had continued to preach the Dharma, transcending time and space":

Nichiren Shonin, based on the teachings of the Primordial Eight Chapter of the Lotus Sutra, wrote the "Na-Mu-Myo-Ho-Ren-Ge -Kyo" Scripture to show us the form of practices and how it should be upheld. In the center of the Scripture are inscribed the seven Chinese characters, Na mu myo ho ren ge kyo", the very core of ehlightenment. Inscribed to the right and left of it are the names of Shakyamuni Buddha and Taho Buddha. To the right and left of them are the names bodhisattvas who were directly trained by the Eternal Buddha and various Guardian Kings of Heaven. Also inscribed are the names of Davedatta and Kishimo-jin (Hariti). Devedatta who was once a disciple of the Buddha later turned against him. He used every means to injure the Buddha. His grave offenses condemned him to hell, but through repentance for his past sins he was once again able to return to the realm of human beings. Kishimo-jin had engaged in evil deeds of abducting and murdering children, but after being admonished by Shakyamuni Buddha, she repented for her sine and became a believer in Buddhism. In short, the Gohonzon not only contains the names of Buddhas, bodhisattvas and saints, but also the names of those that fell into the lower realms of hell, hungry spirits and animals.

The names inscribed on the Gohonzon are those who have attained the state of enlightenment. The Gohonzon that inscribed the names of evil persons within the lower realms indicate that all have the capability to attainting Buddhahood if they confessed to their idleness and sins committed by disparaging the Dharma and making a vow to never commit any sin again. By doing so, they will be given a chance to return to the realm of human beings. They must engage in the practices of the Lotus Sutra in order to return to the realm since there are no shortcuts for those who have fallen into the lower realms to enter into the realm of Buddha.

In the ten worlds manfested in Nichiren Shonin's Gohonzon dwells the spirit of the Eternal Buddha's ten worlds. The Eternal Buddha's ten worlds, described earlier, are not a parallel world on the same level as that of the common people. It is a purified world governed by the realms of Buddhas and Bodhisattvas. From this standpoint the Gohonzon is the ideal Scripture expressing the aspect of the mind for the practitioners.

Theory on enlightenment based on the teaching of Nichiren Shonin

As previously stated, it is difficult for the common people to correctly discipline the mind within the ten realms by using their own wisdom and ability. The support of an outside energy is needed to bring our mind to the same level of the ten realms contained in the Gohonzon.

Based on the teachings of Chapter 21, The Supernatural Power of the Tathagata, Nichiren Shonin stated that by chanting Namumyohorengekyo, the sacred energy can be obtained. He also stated in the Supernatural Power of the Tathagata that the Eternal Buddha entrusted Jogyo to spread the sacred energy containing the merits of enlightenment for the common people in the Mappo Period. How we accept it in our mind is important.

Based on the teachings of Chapter 17, Discrimination of the Merit of the Lotus Sutra Nichiren Shonin stated that the First Stage of the "Four Stages of Faith and Five Stages of Practice" contains the casket of merits of enlightenment. It is a philosophical principle that all phenomena in this world are included in our thought in a single moment.

The spectacle of the Sacred Object Scripture elucidated by Nichiren Shonin in the "Treatise on the Spiritual Contemplation and Object of Worship" is the practice of one's understanding that all beings are Buddha in essence. Accordingly, the names of Buddha, Bodhisattvas, and Guardian Kings of Heaven are written to the right and left of Namumyohorengekyo, and in the center the various kings chanting the

Odaimoku together in a single moment's faith and understanding are shown.

A single moment's faith is chanting the Odaimoku with joy and gratitude without using one's wisdom or ability. Advise others to chant Namumyo□horengekyo. It means that one should not transfer their mind to other religions, but to strictly uphold and understand the teachings of the Fine Dharma. Nichiren Shonin stated that such practitioners will become a Buddha immediately with one's present body (Myojisoku).

To become a Buddha is to extinguish all illusions and be awakened to the universal truth or the fundamental law that governs this universe. Among the various stages of Buddhist practices, Myojisoku is the first stage in which one understands that all beings are Buddha in essence.

In the "Myoko Ichiza" (One Session of the Fine Dharma) of the Hommon Butsuryu Shu's prayer book, "Kanjo Mon" (Invocation of the Buddha and Saints), it states:"May all the saints be invoked from the ten worlds, who leave their position as saints and recite as faithful beginners the sacred syllables Namumyohorengekyo, intensify the light of their wisdom adorned with the pleasure of the Dharma and become one with the Buddha mind. Embrace us with compassion."

Through the repeated chanting of the Odaimoku, our soul perceives responsive communication with the Gohonzon, and the spiritual level of the ten worlds within the mind will increase and will spontaneously be purified.

HBS's explanation of attaining Buddhahood is, as described by Nichiren Shonin, based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra.

When our mind becomes one in a single moment's faith, rejoicing upon first hearing and understanding the Lotus Sutra, and by chanting the Odaimoku, the merits of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas will flow into our soul.

It is important that one learns of the true and honorable doctrines of HBS, but no matter how deeply one understands the doctrines, it will not assist in obtaining Buddhahood.

One can attain the world of Buddhahood only by following the teachings of Nichiren Shonin.

The following are the quotations from Nichiren Shonin and Nissen Shonin.

In the treatise on Shi-Shin-Gohon written at the age of 56 in April in the third year of Kenji (1277) at Minobu, Nichiren Shonin gave the directions how to practice the Lotus Sutra, on the basis of the teaching of Shi-shin-gohon expounded in chapter 17 "Discrimination of Merits" of the Lotus Sutra.

A Single Moment's Faith and Understanding is the first of the four stages of faith which are intended for those living in the lifetime of the Buddha. Rejoicing upon the First Hearing of the Lotus Sutra is the first of the five stages of practice which are intended for those living after the Buddha's demise. These two stages together are the treasure chest of the hundred worlds and thousand aspects of existence and of three thousand realms in a single moment's thought. They are the gate from which all Buddhas of the ten directions and three existences appear.

Question: When those at the level of the first stage of faith practice the Lotus Sutra during the period of the Last Dharma, should they concentrate on the three ways of learning associated with the perfect teaching?

Answer: This is a very important question. so I consulted the passages of the scripture to answer you. As for the first, second, third stages of the five stages of practice, the Buddha restrains those at these stages from observing precepts and meditation, and places all emphasis upon the single factor of cultivating wisdom. It is impossible for them to acquire wisdom by meditation, so the Buddha teaches them to substitute "faith" for it, making the single word 'faith' the foundation. Unbelief is the cause for disparaging the Dharma which prevents one from attaining enlightenment, while faith is the cause for wisdom, and is equal to the stage of Myoji-soku.

Question:What kind of practices are prohibited for practitioners at the level of the first stage of faith in the period of the Last Dharma?

Answer:Such practitioners are restricted to chanting Namumyohorengekyo solely instead of performing alms-giving, keeping precepts and others of five kinds of practice (paramitah). This practice is equivalent to the capacity of people at the stages of "the single moment's faith and understanding" and "rejoicing upon the first hearing of the Lotus Sutra". This is exactly the true intention of the Lotus Sutra.

If the beginner tries to practice the five practices at the same time, that may work to obstruct his primary practice which is faith. Such a person will be like a small ship that is loaded with wealth and treasure and sets out to cross the sea. Both the ship and the treasure will sink. The phrase "should directly give all his attention to embracing the Sutra" doesn't mean to study the Lotus Sutra thoroughly from chapter I to chapter 28. It means to uphold the Daimoku exclusively without paying attention to the other passages of the Sutra, prohibiting recitation of the entire sutra. How much less the five practices! "To set aside formal practices but maintain (meditation on) the principle means that one should set aside the keeping the precepts and the other specific practices (of the five paramitas) and embrace the principle of the Daimoku exclusively. The phrase in the commentary "the benefits will be many and far-reaching" suggests that when the beginner tries to carry out various other practices and the Daimoku at the same time, then his benefits will be completely lost.

Question: Why do you not recommend the meditation on the three thousand realms in a single moment's thought (ichinen sanzen). but strongly urge to chant the Daimoku alone?

Answer: The two characters of the word Nihon or Japan contain within them all the people and animals and wealth in the sixty six provinces of the country without a single ommission. Why do the two characters of the word Gasshi (India) not similarly contain within them all the seventy states of India? The Great Master Myoraku says:"When we mention the title of the sutra, summarizing its content, the whole volumes of the Lotus Sutra are involved therein." Again he says:"When we mention the ten realms and ten factors for brevity, all the three thousand realms are contained therein. "When Bodhisattva Monjushiri and the Venerable Ananda compiled the sermons preached by the Buddha at the three assemblies during the last eight years. they gave it the title "Myohorengekyo" and understanding that the title is appropriate to the sutra, said "Thus have I heard".

Question: When people simply chant Namumyohorengekyo without understanding its meaning, can they obtain the benefits of understanding it?

Answer: When babies are suckled they have no understanding of the taste of milk but it naturally nourishes them. Who ever took the miracle medicine prepared by Jivaka (a great doctor) with enough knowledge of its concoctions? Water extinguishes fire without having that intention. Fire burns things with no intention of doing it. This is what both Nagarjuna and the Great Master Tendai had been well aware of, and I will remind you of it again.

Goshinan (Instruction)

HBS refers to the teaching of Nichiren Shonin as "Gomyohan' and the teachings of the great saints after Nichiren Shonin, particularly of Nichiryu Shonin and Nissen Shonin as "Goshinan".

Two Buddhas

But for our minds, neither the teaching (Dharma) nor the Buddha would exist. In the Lotus Sutra, it is written:

"I am with you whenever and wherever you are."

This teaches us that the eternal Buddha resides even in our lay followers' minds. However, you are wrong if you think that you do not need to uphold the Sacred Object (Myoho). A Buddha described in

the Sacred Object (Myoho) is the most refined in the Buddha's world. But a Buddha in our mind is the one which resides within an unrefined human being. There is a theory that the Buddha and a lay follower are united in mind. The lay follower is the Bodhisattva Visistacaritra. Therefore, we are united with Nichiren. In reality, we obtain such merits from the power of faith and of the Lotus Sutra since we revere and uphold honestly the Sacred Object(Myoho). We must not get conceited.

What is the substance of the Sacred Object (Myoho)?

It is not a scripture of the Lotus Sutra. It is not a meaning of the Lotus Sutra, either. The Buddha says that it is the spirit of the whole Lotus Sutra. It is a major source of life that all of the sentient beings and their surroundings of the entire universe must depend on. The Mahsattva Tendai wrote in his books, GENGI 1, that this Sacred Object (Myoho) is the basis of the whole. Depiction of various saints being converted to this Sacred Object (Myoho) is in a mandala of ten worlds. The Honmon Butsuryu Shu, thus, considers the Daimoku (Myoho) to be the Sacred Object.

Most people think that the Odaimoku of the Wonderful Dharma is the merely title of the Lotus Sutra. It is not. Nor is it a connotation of its teachings. It is a part of the twenty-eight chapters and 69,384 words contained in the eight scrolls, which gave birth to the Lotus Sutra, It is a deep secret treasure contained in the "Ichinen Sanzen" (Three Thousand Realms in a Moment's Thought), which only the Buddha can receive. To be born as a human being and to be able to hear the priceless religious teachings is a reward. Therefore, discard your forbearance and prejudice. Chant only the Odaimoku, Namumyohorengekyo, of the Eternal Buddha with a faithful soul.

Chant the Odaimoku without doubt or thought

Do not entertain various thoughts while chanting the Odaimoku. Of course, to doubt the Odaimoku is not good. Just chant the Odaimoku with a feeling of gratefulness. Why? Because the Odaimoku of the Fine Dharma embraces Buddha's spirit. It is difficult for the common people to comprehend. By earnestly chanting the Odaimoku, one can attain spiritual enlightenment of the Buddha. Even an extraordinary person like Great Master Tendai was unable to understand the Buddha's world of enlightenment. Therefore, it is unlikely that a common person of the Mappo Period will be able to comprehend it by self-study. One can gain and store merits of enlightenment in the soul from the energy embodied in the Odaimoku. One can also enter into the same world of enlightenment that the Eternal Buddha had experienced by chanting the Odaimoku.

Enter into religion by chanting the Odaimoku

Nichiren Shonin stated:"No matter what thoughts arise in the mind, the power of the Odaimoku will enter your soul by chanting the Odaimoku by mouth" Those who see the figure of Nichiren Shonin praying may think that they are his followers, but various worldly thoughts of common people's soul should not be relied upon. Rely only on the Odaimokus, Namumyohorengekyo. Chant it until worldly thoughts are dismissed from the mind. When that happens, the Odaimoku of the Buddha and your soul will come to a mutual understanding and your soul will enter into the Gohonzon. This condition is known as the immediate enlightenment.

12

Buddhism's Explanation of Life and Death

Gazing at death

Where were you born? Were you born at home or in a hospital? If you are over 60 years of age, undoubtedly you were born at the home of your parents. In a nutshell, you were born in a family environment. Today, most babies are born in a hospital. It used to be that most Japanese people died in their home but about 70% of them, today, die on a hospital bed.

We are also in the age of a nuclear family. Only a handful of children live together with their grandparents. There are increasing numbers of children who are without siblings. In Japan, the younger generation does not see a baby being delivered by a mother or an elderly person dying. From this point of view, this society can be said to be "Blind to Birth and Death".

One will not be able to live a healthy Iife without being conscious of death.

In Japan, there are criminals who are on death row awaiting execution. These people are living with a precise consciousness of death. To them "being summoned" arrives abruptly. The prisoner is notified of his execution in the morning of that very day. Life of such prisoners is lonely and stressful and they spend their time making poems, Japanese 31 syllable verses, writing, reading, talking and bathing. Each meal is considered their "Last Supper".

A condemned criminal wrote:"When execution nears, a single day is extremely important. It seems shorter and time speeds away. I now wonder why I did not spend my time more effectively when I was free. There are only regrets. I must rush as time left is very short."

We, all, will someday confront an unexpected death. In that respect, we are like the prisoners awaiting execution. Persons with incurable illness are in a similar situation.

What would your outlook towards others and the surroundings be if you were struck with a terminal illness? Doctor Kazukiyo Imura, at age 31 realized he had cancer. In his posthumously published book manuscript "To Asuka, and to the Unborn Child" he wrote: "I saw a mysterious light when I was parking my car in the apartment's parking space. The world seemed to be sparkling and the people glittered. I saw images of dogs, withering ears of rice and weeds, electric poles, and small stones shining beautifillly. When I entered my apartment, my wife looked noble and I wanted to clasp my hands together in joy".

The concept of death rarely enters into our minds but one must realize that life is not eternal. It will

end someday and therefore, we must live to the fullest every day.

Why do people fear death? They do because they realize that their existing body, and soul will someday cease to exist in this world. What would one think if the spint continued to exist even after the body perished? If we believe that the spirit leaves the body, Iike a butterfly does from its cocoon, anxiety will dissipate.

The following are some points about death that may change your outlook.

A Tibetan Book of the Dead: "Baldo Todol" is a Tibetan book describing death. It is a translation from a Buddhist doctrine that entered into Tibet from India. Recently this book has drawn attention of medical doctors and psychologists on the postmortem world that was explicitly defined in ancient Buddhist doctrines. It coincided with their research on "Out of Body Experience".

Following is a brief digest on life after death explained by Buddhism and the Tibetan book :

1. The spirit departs from the body instantaneously upon death.
2. The spirit that departed from its body is surprised to see itself from the outside, but it soon realizes that he/she is dead.
3. The spirit sees the relatives and friends mourning over the dead body. He/she wants to let them know that he is hovering overhead, but is unsuccessful.
4. The spirit can see and hear things clearly. It can penetrate walls and stones, and can instantaneously shift from one place to another distant land.
5. The spirit sees a transparent or pure light and is wrapped into it.
6. The spirit faces a mysterious mirror. It reflects upon all of the experiences of the deceased during his/her lifetime and is asked to repent.
7. The spirit, thereafter, continues to wander around in darkness for 49 consecutive days.
8. After experiencing limbo, the spirit is led to a suitable world based upon their past deeds accomplished during their lifetime and they will eventually be reborn again (reincarnated).

Experience immediately after death

Are you aware of "Near Death Experiences (here after referred to as NDE)?"

When the heart stops, the pupils of the eyes open. That is when life has concluded. After being pronounced dead by a physician, life rarely resurrects once again. The experience just after death and the time of resurrection is known as "NDE" or "Out of Body Experience".

A physician who became famous for "NDE" research is Raymond Moody, a Professor of medical psychiatry. In 1965, he accidentally learned about "NDE" while attending a conference of psychologists at the Virginia University and became interested in the phenomena. This doctor's story is about his own "NDE". Touched by the experience, he collected 150 "NDE" cases during a ten year period and authored a book entitled "Life after Life". It was surprising to learn from the book that the people who experienced "NDE", while they lived in diffierent areas, had different religions, position, education, and life, experienced almost identical "NDEs"

Numerous "NDE" cases revealed similar patterns of events where the experiences are almost always reported as unemotional, matter-of-fact observations from near the ceiling of the room often occurring while resuscitation procedures are underway. The individuals often hear their physicians talking. It is then accompanied by a passage through a dark tunnel that eventually leads to a place filled with light, warmth and flowers. They experience a sense of love, peace and warmth never experienced before. These are some examples of events that were experienced by those who were pronounced dead and revived to tell about their experiences.

There are those who feel that "NDE" is a hallucination a person experiences during the pre-death state. If it were a hallucination, we expect the experiences to be different from people to people, yet there are

great numbers of similarities among the individual cases.

Professor Micheal B. Sabom, Assistant Professor, Teaching of cardiology at Emory University, USA., had doubts about Professor Moody's research on "NDE". He believed that "NDE" was just a fantasy, but his own research later concluded that Professor Moody's theory was correct. It was real and not a fantasy. (Recollections of Death Medical Research) (Nihon Kyobunsya Literature Company).

Professor Elisabeth Kubler-Ross, another famous psychologist researcher on "NDE", met and interviewed a number of "NDE" persons. Professor Ross's research conclusions were very similar to that of Professor Moody. Her study, based upon blind individuals, also indicated that the subjects clearly saw their own (dead) body and others present around the body while hovering above them.
Undoubtedly, it can be concluded that there are similarities between the researchers and the Tibetan book.

The teachings that were elucidated by Buddhism 2,000 years ago have now been proven to be a fact.

Life between life

The Meaning of "49 Days after Death":

According to a Buddhist doctrine, a spirit departs from the physical body immediately after death and it wanders around for 49 days. How long does it drift and wander around? What types of experiences does it encounter? And what awaits the spirit?

What is a merit-transference?

It is commonly known as the period in which the spirit wanders around in the dark for 49 days. During this 49 days period, a merit transference mourning service is held on the first 7th day after death, then on the 14th day, 21st day and so on until the 49th day to prepare the spirit to enter into the next realm of, other worlds, entering another body and to be reborn. This is known as reposing a deceased spirit in someone's body and to be reborn in a better environment as though the fullfillment of alife of good deeds, one will be escorted immmediately after death to the land of Tranquil Light, the highest realm of the spritual world.

Difference between Virtuous Wandering and Wicked Non-Wandering:

Not everyone's spirit wanders around for 49 days after death. There are spirits that do not wander around. What are those spirits? One is a spirit that accumulated merits through virtuous deeds. This is known as an immediate coping with lifetime good deeds, and one will be escorted to the "Land of Tranquil Light.", known as the spiritual world of utmost dimension, immediately after death.

Nichiren Shonin vividly elucidated in his doctrine, "The Practices as Prescribed". that "Those who upheld and chanted the Odaimoku until their very last breath, Shakyamuni Buddha, Taho Buddha (Treasure Buddha) and Buddhas of the Ten Directions will rush to your side immediately as promised on Mt. Eagle Peak. They will take your hands, carry you on their shoulders. Then, various heavenly gods and deities will raise a canopy over your head and hoist banners and two sages, two heavenly kings and ten female raksasa demons will guard you, and under their protection they will escort you to the Jeweled Land of Tranquil Light."

People who did bad things during their lifetime will also not experience wandering. The spirit that accumulated wrongdoings during its lifetime will instantly fall into the lower realms of hell, hungry spirits, and animals. These realms, below the human realm, are referred to as the world of perplexity.

There are spirits that cling on to the place of their death. These are spirits of people who left resentments in this world, through committing suicide, accident, or being murdered. The wandering spirits have a course to follow depending on individual differences, but most spirits wander around for a period of 49 days. Others may wander around for a year, two, or three years before being reborn.

Medical doctors' experimental reports

What it is like when the spirit is wandering? What does the spirit experience during that time? Presently, medical doctors in Canada and America are utilizing hypnosis experiments in an attempt to delve into the patients past.

When we are tormented by unknown anxieties, bodily disorder or pain that cannot be determined, those conditions are imbedded in one's unconscious world. It is caused by past abominable experiences, such as, a child that experienced molestation or ill treatment by their parents during childhood. The psychical damage remains deep in the soul and during adulthood it causes various disorders. However, those past experiences are suppressed in the world of unconsciousness and are not desirable to be talked about. Consequently, psychologists are utilizing hypnosis to delve in one's past experiences and tracing their sources.

Doctor Joel L. Whitten, a Neurologist and Professor of Toronto University Medical Department, is one of many doctors that is utilizing hypnosis to treat patients by delving into their past life. Doctor Whitten began utilizing the technique of hypnotism from a certain period and he found the existence of spirits wandering in space. He expresses this condition as "Life between Lives". According to his research the spirit, while wandering, has an extremely better perception of everything. The spirit that departed from the body is overlooking its funeral service by hovering above in space and possesses a more contemplative faculty. The spirit repents for his lifetime behaviors and it seems that it can grasp the condition of its present state.

In the early part of October 1973, Doctor Whitten conducted an experiment on a 42 year old woman by delving into her past life. She was a typical northern American wife who was working as an accountant administrator in a company in Toronto.

She underwent 100 hours of testing. She talked about her past life many times systematically, but one day, she suddenly began to talk about her condition of wandering in the following manner:

"I ..... above sky.....am in".
Doctor: "What are you doing above the sky?"
"I.....am waiting..... to be reborn. What mother is doing..... watching now".
Doctor: "Where is your mother now?"
"Mother ..... by the pump ..... pouring water into the bucket ..... it seem to be very difficult."

Thereafter, the spirit entered a woman's body and was reborn.

Since it would take many numbers of pages to further elaborate on its. I will leave it as this. At any rate, there are many other doctors that are conducting experiments on past lives. One of them is Doctor Brian Weiss, author of a book titled, "Treatment for Past Life Patients", a best seller in America.

These research papers by the various medical doctors coincide with the descriptions described in Buddhist doctrines.

This signifies that spirits surely wander around in space.

Memories of past world

Investigation by Virginia Uuiversity

Buddhism elucidates that the past world and future world have a deep relationship in our life. The good/bad or fortunate/unfortunate circumstances that we experience during lifetime are connected to one's behavioral deeds that were conducted in the past world. Your conduct of today forms the environment for the future world.

For example, the following is elucidated in the "Meditation on the Mind-base Sutra" (Mind is so called because it is the basis of all existences and also because it is the base on which all practices are performed).

"If you want to know the causes of the past, look at your conditions of today. If you want to know of your future world, Iook at your causes of today".

If you want to know about how you lived during the past world, it is important to look at your present environment with composure. If your life now is a fortunate one, it is because fortunate seeds had been sowed in the past world. On the other hand, if your environment of today is of unfortunate or successive reproach, it is the cause of the environment you have conducted in the past world. If you want to kuow what is in store for your future life, it is better to reflect on the present day life.

Following is the result of a research on the relationship between cause and effect:

Around 1954, a group in America, headed by Ian Stevenson, M.D. of Virginia University was founded to conduct a research on reincarnation. His research report consisted of approximately 2 thousand cases. Among them, 20 cases showing strong evidences were published under the title "Twenty Cases Suggestive of Reincarnation" and some of the cases on transmigration of the soul from body to body (Metempsychosis).

Swarnlata who danced the dances of the past world:

There is a woman named Swanrlata Mishra, who has a title of Instructor of Botany at the Chhatarpur, University, Madhya Pradesh District

At the age of 3 (DOB:March 2, 1948), she began to speak about strange things. She scared her parents and people around her. "She said she had a past life and spoke of it in detail. She claimed that she was Biya, a daughter of the Pathak Family in Katni City. She had two sons by marriage and her name at that time was Krishna Datta. The family's head was Sri Hira Lal Pathak. The family owned a motor car. The family had also lived in Zhurkutia Mohalla. She saw a railway line and a coal factory from the home that she lived in during her past life. Behind the house was a white building, a girls' school. The door of the school was black with a steel bolt. The front floor was laid out with lithograph. She had had a throat illness and died from it. She was operated on by Dr. S.G. Bhabratt of Napiertown, Jabalpur."

This small child also gave some other detailed memory of her past life although they were in bits, and most of her past life claims was corroborated through interviews of Pathak family members.

In addition, the family members of Pathak with whom she lived as "Biya" in her past life were called, and a research was conducted to confirm her stories about her husband, brother and sisters and sons during her past Iife. In this research, people that had no past life experiences were intentionally mixed among them. This was done to determine how many relatives she could identify during her past life. It was a malicious plot.

The hostess of the Pathak Family, Biya died in 1939. Swarnlata was born in 1948, nine years later. This experiment was conducted when Swamlata was 10 years old. If Swarnlata's past life was Biya, she would be meeting with her past life relatives 19 years later. Further, due to 19 years of lapse, her husband in the past life has aged and her sons have become adults. Under these conditions, Swarnlata during her past life had a reunion with them. Rather, she was forced into it. After Swarnlata was reborn, she has never met them nor heard of their existence from others. But, if it was an illusion or imagination, Swarnlata, as Biya, in her past life would not have been able to identify their names or relationship.

What were the results?

She identified correctly all of the attending participants she did not know. Those she did know she so stated.

Not only that. Swarnlata said to her past life husband, Sri Chintamini Pandey, "You took one thousand two hundred rubies from my box". This fact was only known between the husband and Biya (Swarnlata's past life name).

In regard to Swarnlata, there is an additional extraordinary occurrence to be mentioned:That is, there were two confusing memories of her past life at the age of four, but as she grew older she was able to differentiate it and talk about it.

The other past life experience is about a girl, Kamlesh who lived in Sylhet, Assam County, that died a year before Swarnlata was born.

To surmise, Biya died in 1939, was reborn as Kamlesh in 1940 and died in 1947, a very short life. Then, in 1948, Kamlesh was reborn as Swarnlata. The positive proof that Swarnlata was Kamelsh was based on her words and dance. When Swamlata was six years of age, one day she suddenly began a queer dance while singing a song in unheard words.

An investigation by the astonished father and people around her disclosed that the words sung by her were Bengal words that even her parent did not know of. The dance was of a Bengal district that was 2 thousand kilometers away. Checking on Swarnlata's past life name, Kamlesh, revealed that she was well versed in the songs and dances of the Bengal district. There is a proverb. "Sparrows do not forget dances for a hundred years". Man also remembers words and dances they have learned in past life.

In the later part of the Edo Period, Nissen Shonin, who engaged in a new reformation movement of Buddhism, was able, as a boy of six, the play first stage of the game of "Go", and who said, "an illiterate child can gain ability by studying" stems from a destiny of the past world, so Buddhism stated.

Nissen Shonin's instructive poem stated:

To laugh at becoming skillful at age 80
Is preparation for the future world.

Experiences of the Past World Drags On:

A businessman named Parmod Sharma lived in a small city of Bisauli, 140 kilometers west of Moradabad City, Uttar Pradesh County, India. From the time he was born on October 11, 1944, he possessed a queer characteristic. First of all, he hated curd foods. It is like a Yogurt. There is hardly any Indian that dislikes curds. However, Parmod unsoundly never ate it. Secondly, he extremely hated to take a bath. He reacted with fear when his parents forcefully attempted to bathe him. Thirdly, he liked to play by himself, but he mainly kneaded dirt to form shape of a biscuit, and built building like things by piling on bricks. Fouthly, although no one taught him, he began at times to speak English at the age of three. The family spoke only Hindu, but he blurted out words like bath-tub bakery, and town hall. He also liked soda water when he was a child.

What is significant is Parmod past world experiences that he spoke of about age 8 were confirmed. He stated that "I was one among the Parmod brothers that owned a soda and biscuit shop in Moradabad. He had a wife, four sons and a daughter. The store was a large one".

When Parmod was 5 years old, he begged his father to take him to the City of Moradabad during his past life and, one day in the summer of 1949, his wish was realized. Of course, this was the first time he

had visited that city but he gave the impression that he had been living there for a long time by asking the driver to turn right or left on roads while riding in a horse-drawn vehicle. He said, "Father, this is the town hall. We're nearing our house". And, when stopping the horse-drawn vehicle in front of the brick building, the soda and biscuit store, he said that it was his store and alighted from the wagon.

The following events became known when checking on the things Parmod said:

1. The person that Parmod mentioned who lived in Moradabad did exist.
2. This person is the younger brother, Parmanand Mehra, of the Mohan Brothers and he died on the 9th of May 1943.
3. Parmanand owned a large confectionary shop. The firm manufactured and sold biscuits and he spoke English.
4. Parmanand said as a child in the previous world he had eaten too much curd and became sick with chronic gastrointestinal illness and appendicitis and died in a bath tub. It was confirmed that he had indeed died in a bath tub while bathing to treat his appendicitis.
5. That he had wife and children were true. He named each of them by name during their life in the previous world .
6. He explained about the usage of the equipments on the store he visited it for the first time.

It should be noted that after his rebirth his dislike for curd and bathing is still with him

A Boy with a Sword Scar:
Ravi Shankar.

Ravi Shankar was born in July 1951 in Chhipatti District of Kanaju, a city of Uttar Pradesh near Kanpur. He had a unusual horizontal scar around his neck at birth which looked like a cut from a sword.

At around between the ages of 2 and 3, when a child begins to talk, he faced his mother and sister and began to speak in a strange way, "I am the son of Sri Jageshwar Prasad, a barber in the past world". "My father is living in the District of Chhipatti (of Kanuj). Will you take me there."

Just before age 5, he was taken by his mother to attend a memorial service to a temple. When seeing certain attendance he shouted, "Ah", and his face began to change in a fearful color, and his body shook. It was Chaturi, who had killed him in the past world. Most children that speak of their memories of the past world, they possess a detail memory of their death. In the case of Ravi, it was shocking.

Ravi claimed, "I have been killed by Chaturi and another man that slashed my throat, and was buried in the ground. Before being killed, I ate fruits. I was taken near a river and killed."

Based on Ravis revelation, a research was conducted on past murder cases revealed that one year before Revi's birth, the following incidents occurred on the January I 9, 1951:

Munna, a son of a barber, was kidnapped and later, found dead near a river with a slashed throat. Just prior to being murdered by Ghaturi, another man was seen with him by a witness. They were both arrested, but due to insufficient evidence they were released and the incident went unsolved.

In short, the incident had occurred as described by Ravi. It was proven that Ravi's claim of "I had eaten Guava before being killed" and Munna's mother's testimony was true. Ravi had after being reborn catches sight of the man that killed him, but he was not convicted although he had confessed to it because it was on the memory of the past life. Chaturi, thereafter, fled and vanished out of sight.

As mentioned above, memories of the past life do carry on into this present world and leaves a scar.

Nissen Shonin stated: "The spirit does not disappear by encountering fog. Today's dusk is the beginning to tomorrow."

13

Low of Karma

Hypnosis therapy on past life

There is a past world and a future world does exist.

Following are several cases of therapeutics research conducted through hypnosis.

One day in autumn of 1950, Hypnotist Counselor Raymond Bernstein of Pueblo City, Colorado State, U.S.A., hypnotized a middle age woman, Simmons (phonetic). Hypnosis is a tool to help patients remember long-forgotten incidents. Hypnosis therapy is used to relieve one's sufferings by retrogression on their age, such as, "You now have returned to the age of twenty";"now you are seven years old. Through the use of hypnosis therapy, Counselor Bernstein by chance discovered that it could be used to delve into one's past life.

Dr. Bernstein had Ms. Simmons speak about her childhood memories from age 5, and then lowered it to age 3. and to the time of birth while in trance under hypnosis. But, at that instance, Ms Simmons suddenly began to suffer. Being relieved from her suffering, she began to talk about her husband, her neighbors, her place of residence in Cook City, about the cobble stone streets, and a vehicle drawn by two horses. She also revealed that her former name was Bridie (phonetic) Murphy.

Ms. Simmons was born and raised in lowa;Thus, her daily spoken English was typically of Central American accent. However, under hypnosis, her spoken English was of unheard old-fashioned English. She verbalized incomprehensible words that were not even in a dictionary.

Dr. Bernstein of New York Times Life Magazine, a scholar of Colorado University conducted an investigation to confirm Ms. Simmons's revelations. It was proven that the name, Birdie (phonetic) Murphy, was real.

Ms. Murphy was born in 1798 in Cook City, Ireland. Her mother, Catherine, was the wife of Duncan Murphy, a lawyer. She was their daughter. She married Bryant when she was 17 years of age. She died in 1865. That was 59 years before Ms. Simmons was born.

Her descriptions about her surroundings in Cook City were proven to be correct. On the spot, an investigation by philologists of Colorado University revealed that the unheard words like, "Tappans" and "Bairy Cross" (both phonetic spellings). "Tapans" was the name of coin used exclusively in Central lreland. "Bairy Cross" was the name of a small village near Cook City. Ms. Simmons had verbalized dead words that even citizens of Cook City did not use.

Following is a direct quote from several passages from "Many Lives, Many Masters", a book authored by Doctor Brian L. Weiss, a psychiatrist:

"I know that there is a reason for everything. Perhaps at the moment that an event occurs we have neither the insight nor the foresight to comprehend the reason, but with time and patience it will come to light.

"I first met Catherine in 1980 when she was twenty-seven years old. She had come to my office seeking help for her anxiety, panic attacks, and phobias. Although these symptoms had been with her since childhood, in the recent past they had become much worse. Every day she found herself more emotionally paralyzed and less able to function. She was terrified and understandably depressed.

"For eighteen months I used conventional methods of therapy to help her overcome her symptoms. When nothing seemed to work, I tried hypnosis. In a series of trance states, Catherine recalled "past-life" memories that proved to be the causative factors of her symptoms. She also was able to act as a conduct for information from highly evolved "spirit entities", and through them she revealed many of the secrets of life and death. In just a few short months, her symptoms disappeared, and she resumed her life, happier and more at peace than ever before.

"This book is my small contribution to the ongoing research in the field of parapsychology, especially the branch dealing with our experiences for birth and after death."

A noteworthy point of Dr. Weiss's book is that he emphasizes that people suffering from illness or troubles in this present world are the causative factors of past world experiences.

Following is a case of Lacy:

Lacy is a high school teacher in her late 40s. For a long period of time, she suffered from Asthma. She also had phobia about water. Probing her past life by hypnosis revealed that when she was eight or nine years old she fell from a cliff and died. Further, she remembered that at age 11 or 12, she was a slave in the Middle East in ancient times. At this time, she was working as a helper to make brick from dried grasses and straws. She died from suffocation by being pinned under a overturned freight car while loading wet straws. While reminiscing about that experience, she talked about her suffering from lack of breath and panicking.

Following is a case of Elaine:

Elaine is a famous psychologist in Miami who suffered from pains in her neck, shoulders, and upper back. And, from childhood she suffered from acrophobia and was fearful of drowning. Under hypnotic trance, she said, "I am always in darkness. It was completely dark. I realized that I was blindfolded. I was looking from the outside. I was standing on a tower. It was a tower on the wall of a stone castle. My hands were tied in the back. I was about 20 year old. I understood that I was a soldier in a lost war. At that time, I felt a severe pain in my back. I became aware that I was clinching my teeth's, my arms were stiff and my hands were clenched. I was stabbed in the back by a spear. I felt it but I did not scream. At the next instance, I felt that I had fallen into a moat". Additionally, Elaine vividly talked about her past life in medieval times. At that time, she was a male. At age 20, he was arrested on a crime he had not committed, and was hanged on the gallows in public.

Men not only are born again and die again. One's various good or bad deeds will cause various consequences in their next life circumstances or bodily structure. These types of past world acts and experiences affecting the next life consequences are known as Karma in Buddhism.

What is the rule of karma?

Our various daily behaviors or experiences will in time disappear. The actions and experiences of seeing a movie, practicing sports, reading a book, will become of the past and will be bygones. However, although there may be some differences in actions and experiences based on individual standards it will cast some kind of consequences on one's soul and bodily development. For example, a certain youth saw

Director Akira Kurosawa's movie, "Red Beard". The action of seeing a movie will end within 3 hours, but the impression and excitement received from the movie will remain in his mind and may have an impact on his life. Or, in order to reduce one's weight one will take a walk at a fast pace on a daily basis for an hour to burn out their fat from the body. Walking will also strengthened the feet and hips resulting in improving functions of the internal organs.

Buddhism elucidates that the acts and experiences conducted in this present world will have some consequences in the future world. The energy that crosses over from one life to the next is practice. In other word, it is Karma.

How do our present life experiences and practices affect our life in the future world? The core is transmigration —cycle of birth and death—Arayashiki.

A brief description of soul structural mechanism elucidated by Buddhism follows:

The mechanism of seeing, hearing, to smell, to taste, and to feel by skin hotness and coldness or pain is called the five organs of senses. Through the function of the five senses to recognize and to judge by mind is referred to as the 6th conscious. It is alright to imagine that the 6th conscious is your soul to think and feel. Buddhism elucidated that there is a 7th conscious deep within the 6th conscious. It is called Mana Shiki. Modern psychology refers to it as the sub consciousness or the unconscious sphere of the soul. Buddhism maintains that there is a fundamental working sphere of the soul deep within the 7th conscious known as the 8th conscious. This 8th conscious is the core of transmigration and is the kernel continuation of the karma for the next life.

Not remembering daily accounts and experiences of twenty years ago is the 6th conscious. In other words, it is the external soul, but the 8th conscious stores all memories of one entire life span in small details. Patients that recollects their life in the previous world under hypnosis is the result of information that was recorded in the 8th conscious.

The 8th conscious is also referred to as Arayashiki. In ancient Indian word it meant, "To store". The Arayashiki in addition to storing all information on one's actions and experiences changes it into seeds (Shuji). Shuji is a psychological energy that changes one's destiny and builds one's environment in the future world. All of the things one saw, heard, talked about, read about, thought about, becomes seeds and is sowed into the Arayashiki. These seeds become energy and functions in remaking destiny, environment, facial expression, and the external soul.

Furthermore, even though one's body becomes extinct through death, the Arayashiki is eternal.

There are five patterns of cases about manifestation of seeds and transmigration for future life:

1. Past life experiences become bodily evidences (vestige) in this present world.
2. Past life experiences will appear in this present life as bodily handicaps or mental disorders.
3. Past life experiences will eradicate the fearful soul toward special things.
4. Past life experiences wm be repeated in this present world. Similarily, the past life experiences will be repeated in the future world.
5. The skills that were acquired in the past world will be carried over into this present world and displayed.

Experiences in the Past World will leave its mark on the body:

An intense hardship experienced in the past world will leave its mark on the body even after rebirth. It is the example of Ravi Shankar.

Appearing as Bodily Handicaps or Physical Handicaps:

An unfavorable experience in the past world will appear in the form of bodily or physical handicaps in this present world. This is Lacy's case.

Having Fear on Special Things:

An experience of fear in the past world will reappear in the same form in this present world. This is Parmod's case.

Repeating Identical Experiences of the Past World:

Experiences in the past world will be repeated in this present world. Similar human relationships that took place in the past world will be repeated in this present world as in the case of Paulo Lorenz. He stated that he was the rebirth of his elder sister, Emilia, who had committed suicide in October 1921, a year and two months before Paulo's birth. Paulo had also attempted suicide previously on a number of occasions. He finally died by committing suicide by burning himself in September 1966.

Doctor Brian Weiss, who conducted numerous interviews of his patients by means of hypnosis stated:

"Many of my patients under hypnosis recollected various similar patterns of trauma. Among one of them, there is a father and daughter's incestuous relationship that continued for several centuries and is repeated again in this present world. Then there is a pattern of a violent husband in the past world that reappeared as a violent father. There are cases when drinking were the ruin of man in the past world, a similar pattern is taking place in this present world. There is a case of a couple that was on bad terms and killed each other four times in the past world.

Nissen Shonin who founded HBS stated:

> *Rivalry never ends in this living world. There are good and bad destinies among parent and children, wife and children, master and student, teachers and friends. By meeting and practicing the religion of the Lotus Sutra evil acts will be altered and stopped. Bad destinies will continue to cling on to human bondage and will not separate between birth and death. But, the religion of HBS eradicates bad destinies through practices.*

The Skills acquired in the Past World is demonstrated in this Present World.

What have been studied and learned in the past world will be carried over into this present world and its skills can be demonstrated. This is in the case of Swarnlata.

Delving into the people's past world cannot be accomplished ordinarily, but the following two cases can be considered as an accomplishment of past world memories:

In August 1971, the six years old son, Raymond, of Frank Feritta (phonetic) who resided in Los Angeles, U.S.A., suddenly began to play jazz on the piano. Raymond never touched a piano nor learned to play it before. However, his piano performance was the exact style of pianist, Thomas "Fat" Waller who died in 1945. Raymond is likely to be the rebirth of Waller.

Mozart, a famous musical composer, composed minuet, piano concerto, and sonata musics at age 6. At age 7, he composed a long opera. Mozart was apparently a musical composer in past life. Skills that one learned in his lifetime are carried on to the next life.

From the above examples, it is evident that humans go through the cycle of birth and death and what they have spent in their past life will once again be created into the next environnlent.

Nichiren Shonin stated: "To create practices for the future world various hardships must be undertaken. Past world afflictions gathered will cause various hardships."

14

Five Period Classification of the Buddha's Teachings by Great Master Tendai

The various sutras, including the Lotus Sutra,were viewed to have been compiled three or four hundred years after the passing of Buddha into Nirvana. The Five Period classifications of sutras by Great Master Tendai, therefore, were not considered to be based on philological examination and researches. Great Master Tendai, a gifted man with superior scholarly talent and an eye for religion, scrutinized the various sutras and discovered the true intentions of the hidden words within the Lotus Sutra. He classified the various sutras in Five Periods in order to restore Buddha's 50 years of expositions of the Dharma.

When were the sutras compiled?

The Buddhist Council comprised of Buddha's disciples compiled the sutras but the date of editing is unknown. In fact, Buddhist priests were initially not interested in ascertaining thier date of origin. Moreover, it was difficult to determine the exact period because philology was not advanced as it is today.

In the 19th century, researches to determine the sutras' time of origin had intensified. As a result, it was determined that the various sutras had originated long after the death of Buddha. Moreover, it became known that the Agama Sutras of the Small Vehicle Religion (Hinayana), which had a low evaluation, had originated much earlier than the Hannya—kyo (the Wisdom Sutra), the Jodo Sanbu—kyo (Pure Land Sutras) and the Lotus Sutra of the Large Vehicle Buddhism.

Based on philological researches, it was also determined that the sutras of the Large Vehicle were not the teachings of the Buddha. During a certain period after entering into the Meiji Era (in the 19th sentury), it was ascertained that the sutras of the Small Vehicle Religion were the true teachings of the Buddha.

Unquestionably, all of the sutras, including the Lotus Sutra of the Large Vehicle, had originated about three or four hundred years after the passing of Buddha into Nirvana. Consequently, they were not the true teachings elucidated by Buddha from the viewpoint of philology. This can also be said of the Agama Sutras because it had originated about 100 years later after Buddha's death.

In other words, all sutras of the Large and Small Vehicle, may be considered as false teachings because they were not written by the Buddha during his lifetime.

Large and small vehicle teachings

Then, are the sutras of the Large and Small Vehicle teachings, as well as the Lotus Sutra, not the true teachings of the Buddha? Didn't the Large Vehicle spread the true nature of enlightenment of the Buddha?

When Buddha was alive, people considered the recording of his sermons were injurious to his dignity. Consequently, all of Buddha's teachings were passed on to its followers by Buddha's disciples by mouth. This method of communication was knovn as the "Mouth to Mouth Tradition"

One may feel that this "Mouth to Mouth Tradition" way of communication lead to inaccuracies but, in olden Japan, some people known as raconteurs had superior capability of memorizing voluminous amount of events, stories and traditions, which they verbally transmitted to the people. In comparison, the people of today rely heavily on printed matters and technology as means of communication.

However, this mouth tradition created friction and differences of opinion as to how the teachings of the Buddha should be interpreted between the conservative and progressive groups. This situation arose 100 years after the death of the Buddha.

The conservative group which wanted to faithfully protect the commandment abided by its tradition. On the other hand, the progressive group was searching for a more realistic way to practice religion while keeping abreast of the changing times. Those differences of opinion created frictions among the factions and, eventually, lead to the formation of two separate groups known as the Joza—bu of the conservatives and the Daishu—bu of the progressive groups. These two groups later formed about 20 independant schools.

A Buddhist dictionary stated:"According to the Sarvastivadin tradition, the Buddhist order split into two schools as a result of Mahadeva's heresy; his followers formed the Mahadeva's School, while the more conservative priests who rejected his new theories, In the third century after the demise of the Buddha, the Sarvastivada School (Ubu) emerged from the latter school Later the Sthavira School declined and moved to the Himalaya region □ hence its alternate name, Haimavata (Sessen—bu). Southeast Asian Buddhistis also called Theravada. but its doctrine is quite different from the Sthavira described in the Sarvastivadin works." "Daishu—bu is also called Makasogi, the school of the great samgha. It means belonging to the great priests. One of the two principle Himayama schools. It is the more liberal and progressive school than the others, for example, the Sthavira (Theravada) School. It is said that this sect grew at the time of the Second Great Buddhist Council after the death of the Buddha." These two groups, made up of priests, were entirely engaged in the practices of Buddhism.

A rival group made up of civilians (laymen) formed a new buddhist movement to counter the priests' theology. They called themselves the large vehicle for the salvation of the people. They wanted a freer religious body unlike that of the priests, who were tied to the complicated commandments. This was known as the Large Vehicle Religious movement.

Small vehicle priests are nihilists?

I would like to mention in detail the formation process of the two groups and the flow of Buddhism.

The first sermon, "Shotenporin", delivered by the Buddha after attaining enlightenment elucidated that mankind will be burdened by various hardships. It was a pessimistic teachings in nature. The objective was to show how hardships can be overcome. The methods greatly differed between the Small and Large Vehicle Religions.

Shakyamuni Buddha stated:"The cause of sufferings after all is egoistic attachment. Greed by no means can be satisfied. Therein lies sufferings."

What can be done to avoid experiencing hardships? It is to extinguish all afflictions from the soul which

create greed. This was the philosophy of the Small Vehicle Religion. However, it is extremely difficult to eliminate afflictions, greed and worldly desires. Hence, the Small Vehicle Religion imposed many austere commandments upon its followers to protect themselves and exercise patience for the elimination of afflictions. At the same time, to avoid worldly grime and pollutions, the priest severed contact with the masses and confined themselves in forests far away from human habitation for liberation and pursuit of religious practices.

The priests had maintained that the people who desired to engage in religious activities must become priests to keep the commandment. If not, they were not considered to be a true practitioner and would not be able to attain salvation.

The lay countered. Have you thought about what could happen if eveyone became a priest? Who would be engaged in the production of agriculture and commerce? What would happen if everyone became a priest and abided by the commandment by not taking a spouse? If you consider bearing children sinful, mankind will cease to exists. One need not be a priest to attain salvation.

We, laymen, considered the priests to be nihilists. Was Shakyamuni Buddha a nihilist? Priest were shackled by rituals and failed to capture the true meaning of the Buddha's teachings. If it is alright for mankind to become non—existent. the commandment becomes meaningless.

In this way, the rivalry between the priests and laymen gained momentum.

The lay group advocated freer religious activities and the priest theologians compiled their own sutras. The priests theory for livelihood was to save themselves and to seek the path to emancipation. The lay group called the priest theologians the small vehicle. The laymen's theory, which elucidated the teachings of salvation to themselves and others sought a path to bodhisattva, as the Buddha did, and proclaimed themselves the large vehicle.

The path to bodhisattva elucidated by the large vehicle teachings:

Whether it be the Small or Large Vehicle Religions, there were many similarities between them. They both expounded the teachings that mankind is confronted with many types of sufferings. For example, the Lotus Sutra stated:"There are no tranqulities in this world of ours. It is a home full of passions".

The Small Vehicle Religion elucidated that unless evil passions were eliminated, no one can escape from the many sufferings in this world, which is like a burning home. The Large Vehicle Religion does not take the same position.

The Yuima Sutra (Vimalakiriti-nirdesa-sutra) said:"Enlightenment can be accomplished through true meditation even though evil passions are not eliminated." This one phrase shows the position taken by the Large Vehicle Religion.

Yuima (Vimalakiriti) Koji (Koji means a lay devotee of the Buddha) was an honest and earnest lay parishioner. He shows us the movements of Buddhist laymen at the time when the Mahayana Buddhism was evolving.The above phrase are the words said by Yuima Koji to Sharihotsu Sonja who had left his home became a hermit and was living peacefully in a dark forest and growing old.

Sharihotsu Sonjya was one of the ten major disciples of the Buddha. Born in a village to the north of Rajagriha in Magadha, India, he was regarded as the most brilliant of Buddha's disciples. He died while the Buddha was still alive.

Sitting quietly in contemplation to achieve peacefulness is meditation, but Yuima Koji, seeing the figure of Sharihotsu Sonja in meditation, said to him sarcastically, "Meditating in a dark forest will not enable you to enter into Nirvana". With a suspicious facial expression, Yuima Koji further added," Do you think that leaving home and meditating in the mountain is really the true path to Nirvana? I believe that enlightenment can only be achieved by mingling with people who are suffering in order to relieve them from evil passions, such as ambitions, anger, and disputes. Departing from the realities of society will not help to attain the state of enlightenment.

The words that Yuima Koji threw at Sharihotsu Sonjya were the general opinion of the Large Vehicle Religion. Shakyamuni Buddha's religious practices for many years were not the object for enlightenment. Only after attaining enlightenment, did the Buddha engage in the practices of salvation of the masses.

Even a person full of evil passions already shows the form of the Buddha when making efforts to save people according to his or her rue. This is the spirit running through the Bodhisattva way.

Receiving visible merits is evidences of true Buddhism:

About one thousand four hundred years ago, a gifted Buddhist, named Great Master Tendai, appeared in China. He examined and studied every sutra precisely, and, as result, divided the periods of the Buddha's teachings of the dharma into the ensuing five classifications:

1. The Kegon Period in which the Buddha preached the Kegon-kyo. This period covered the first thirty Seven days after enlightenment.
2. The Rokuon Period which covered the next twelve years, in which the Buddha preached the Agama Sutra in the Rokuya-on Garden, etc.
3. The Hodo Period in which the Buddha preached the bulk of the Mahayana sutras.
4. The Hannya Period covering twenty-two years, in which the Buddha preached the Hannya-gyo.
5. The Hokke Period and Nehan Period in which the Buddha preached these two sutras. The Lotus Sutra took eight years to preach. The Nehan Sutra only one day and one night.

Kegon-gyo, a Mahayana Sutra

Agama Sutra, sutras belonging to Hinayana.

Hannya-gyo, a sutra presenting the transcendental wisdom of the void.

Nehan-gyo, the Nirvana Sutra. Extinction, Originally, the state of enlightenment attained by Shakyamuni Buddha. Accordingly, it means the state which can be reached by extinguishing all illusions and destroying all karma, which is the cause of rebirth. In the Sarvastivada School, it is called extinction obtained by knowledge and is said to be good in nature and eternal. According to Mahayana, it denotes non—production (fusho) and non—destruction (fumetsu), and is equated with wisdom. It has the four essential qualities of eternity, happiness, substantiality and pureness. Therefore, nirvana, which originally meant extinction or annihilation, came to signify the dharma—kaya of the tathagata which is real and unchanging.

Upon classifying the five periods, Great Master Tendai claimed that the Large Vehicle Religion's sutras, such as the Kegon and the Hannya Sutras were better than the Small Vehicle Religion's Agama Sutra, but among those various sutras, the Great Master Tendai judged that the Lotus Sutra was the most superior.

There were some buddhist scholars, however. who did not approve of the Great Master Tendai's Five Period classification. They claimed that it had no basis.

Surely, from the standpoint of philology, the sutras of the Large Vehicle Religion, including the Lotus Sutra, were all edited a hundred of years after the death of the Buddha. Thus, such type of classification can only be construed to be nonsense. The compilation of sutras by the Great Master Tendai were not based on philology. He attempted to determine the deep meaning contained in the words of Buddha from his long experience and an eye for religion.

Although the sutras were compiled many years later, the spirit which flows therein was passed on by Buddha to his disciples and on to the practitioners.

As I have mentioned before, the Great Master Tendai said that the teachings of the path to Boddhisattva expounded by the Large Vehicle Religion were the true intentions of the Buddha. Since the Lotus Sutra was judged as the best and most complete teachings of the path to Bodhisattva, it became

the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha in his late years.

I believe that sutras should be judged on thier contents rather than thier origin based on philology.

Nissen Shonin's instructive teaching titled. “Merits of the Lotus Sutra" stated: “If the true teachings of the Lotus Sutra are doubted, how can you put faith in any other sutra. Receiving visible merits through faithful practice of the Lotus Sutra is manifest evidence that it is a true religious teachings".

Part II How to Practice

1

Practices Performed by HBS

The importance of chanting the "Odaimoku" out loud, rather than a silent prayer within your heart, cannot be emphasized enough. Buddhism is practiced by using the body(Shin), the speech(Ku), and the conscience of thoughts(I). The application of these elements in the worshipping process are illustrated in the following examples.

Some people practice religion with their bodies by meditating under the waterfalls, depriving themselves of food and sleep for days in a closed sanctuary, or taking a treacherous hike in mountains and valleys in remote areas. These religious practices, however, can be accomplished only by a healthy person who possesses the endurance to withstand harsh and difficult conditions. These practices are at times, hazardous, if not time consuming. In these modern times, most people do not have the time to engage themselves in these practices. Because of the limitations inherent in these practices involving the body, this form of practice is not recommended to most individuals.

The thought-concentration practice is usually accomplished through meditation. It calms your soul from the frustrations of life and helps to awaken the 'Buddhist nature'. This practice, however, is neither suited nor easily accomplished by an ordinary person. Deep within one's soul is a dark unconscious world which one cannot reach nor control no matter how much you try through meditation. Even one's conscious soul cannot be controlled by one's thought process. This phenomenon can be observed in many situations where one react or do things that one knows better not to, such as overeating, smoking and getting angry. Because most people have difficulties controlling their actions, despite what they know intellectually, the practice of meditation centered on thought concentration is found to be most difficult to achieve.

Practice which can be performed by anyone.

What about the practice through speech of chanting the 'Odaimoku'? This type of meditation can be done by any one of all ages, anywhere and at any time. It can be accomplished while walking, driving, and even while doing chores with your hands, whenever and wherever you wish. Because of its practical uses, this method of practice is found to be the most important of the three types mentioned.

Nichiren Shonin recommended that ordinary people practice through speech by chanting the `Odaimoku'. It is found to be the least difficult practice because it can be done at any time and anywhere.

Although `Odaimoku' can be chanted silently, the chanting in a strong voice is recommended for the following reasons.

Use of 'the five sense-organs'

One of the main objectives of our religion is to plant in one's conscious mind Buddha's virtuous merits of enlightenment which is instilled in the 'Odaimoku', to filter the evil and to build virtuous merits in the mind. Which practice do you think, silent or out loud, will better accomplish this objective?

Humans listen to the sound with their ears, view objects with their eyes, smell with their noses, and taste with their tongues. The body experiences sensations and the mind makes decisions. In Buddhism, these faculties are referred to as the six senses. In order to sow and transmit the seeds of the six senses deep into the `Arayashiki', it is more effective to arouse as many senses as one possesses. Therefore, when one prays silently, it only arouses the thought consciousness, and consequently, becomes a weak method of sowing the seed into the `Arayashiki'. However, when we chant the `Odaimoku' aloud, all of our senses are awaken and aid the transmission of the teachings into our minds.

Nissen Shonin said, "To chant earnestly the `Odaimoku', by your mouth and your mind, is to sow the seeds of Buddhahood in the pasture of your soul. That is `Geshu."

Chanting repeatedly is a Buddhist practice (training):

There are some people who say that it is not necessary to chant the `Odaimoku' repeatedly over hundreds and thousands of times. Instead, ten times should be sufficient, if one prays earnestly. If that is the case, why did Nichiren Shonin require the repetitive chanting of the `Odaimoku'?

It is because, if the chanting is not done correctly, it ceases to be a training. In Buddhist faith, worshipping is a form of training. An athlete must train and practice daily for hours to become proficient in his endeavor. Likewise, in religion, fervent practice and training are necessary to make one's mind receptive to the benefits and good fortunes it provides.

HBS does not differentiate between wise and unwise (wisdom and nonwisdom). It disregards all things and concentrates only on chanting `Namumyohorengekyo'. The training is being done in compliance with this idea. If the `Odaimoku' is repeated only ten or twenty times, it cannot be considered as training.

Nissen Shonin said, "To chant the 'Odaimoku' ten thousand times will enable one to comprehend the value of blessings (Goriyaku) received."

The repetitive chanting of the `Odaimoku' is analogous to training in sports, and only through repetitive chanting, can one receive the benefits of good fortunes.

Among our parishioners, there are some who feel that chanting the`Odaimoku' is too repetitive. We do not chant only for the sake of repetition. As the teachings indicate, we chant to create merits. For every chant of the `Odaimoku', we are creating an equivalent number of good merits.

Nissen Shonin said, "Do not misconstrue yourself to be talented when you are just ordinary. It is, also, a big mistake to consider that you are accomplishing your practice by chanting the `Odaimoku' only once."

Posture, Chantig Speed and Method

Posture:

Chanting the Odaimoku from a sitting position is permitted if benches or chairs are provided in the

main hall of the temple. An outdoor prayer service while standing is permissible as well.

The most important thing is to maintain an orderly and respectful posture and avoid having a lax atitude appearances. Following are several points to be considered during chantig of the Oaimoku :

1. Hold your head high in order to see the Mandala. Lowering your head should be avoided. Maintain an erect posture with relaxed shoulders. Try to keep your legs in a perpendicular position while sitting. Do not cross your legs or have them stretched out unless you have a physical limitation. Stand firmly on both feet while standing and try not to avoid balancing the body on one foot.
2. Chant the Odaimoku distinctly. Mumbling the Odaimoku is not recommended. Chanting at an extremely fast pace should be avoided. It will only break down the rhythm of chanting and enunciation of "Namu myo ho ren ge kyo". Nissen Shonin shows the answers which are obvious in the flowing questions: "Which type of chanting will fulfill the spirit of the Buddha? Is it an energetic correct way of chanting or a slothful one?" If you are to chant the Odaimoku, it is better to chant it aloud. Chanting mutely will not only arouse worldly thoughts, but will serve no purpose in manifesting mercy and compassion.
3. Avoid worldly thoughts during the chanting of the Odaimoku. Nichiren Shonin stated: "No matter what your spiritual feeling may be, chant the Odaimoku by mouth". Nissen Shonin also stated: "What takes place in the mind is yourself. Let that not become an obstacle. Just chant the Odaimoku". No matter what worldy thoughts may arise, ignore them and chant the Odaimoku. Long chanting sessions eradicates worldly thoughts and unites the mind with the soul. It is difficult to achieve that during short sessions. So listen carefully to the chanting voices.

Chanting Speed and Method of Striking the Wooden Clappers:

There is no set regulation as to how wooden clappers should be stricken. Strike them according to the pace of your chant. Depending on the temples, some prefer that the wooden clappers be stricken at a fast pace. Others prefer a slow pace.

While chanting at home, it is recommended that the wooden clappers be stricken 6 times per one Odaimoku. During a prayer session for the recovery of the sick, the wooden clappers are stricken at a faster pace. At solemn funeral or merit transference services, it is customary to chant the Odaimoku at a very slow place in unison with the striking of the wooden clappers minute.

Wooden clappers are an accompaniment to coincide with the chanting rhythm of the Odaimoku. Hold one clapper in the left, cupped hand in a stationary position and strike it with the clapper held in the right hand. It will produce a good sound. If the clapper is held flatly in the left hand, it will hinder the resonance of the sound when stricken. The clappers held in the hands should be positioned in front of the chest at the level of the pit of your stomach. There are some parishioners that hold the clapper on their left and rest it on their thigh, but that is disrespectful and is not recommended. The wooden clappers should be stricken at a same intensity six times in unison with the chanting, Namu, myo, ho, ren, ge, kyo.

Striking wooden clappers at the temple or at home, make sure that the sound rhymes with the chanting. If that is difficult, do away with the clappers and pound your fist on the thigh to maintain rhythm. Clappers are used to regulate the rhythm of chanting. Do not strike it with all your might. A loud sound is not only annoying to others, but it will block out the sound of chanting voices. Refrain from swaying the body or shaking the head from right to left while chanting.

2

One Session of The Fine Dharma

Enactment of the One Session of the Fine Dharma (Myoko Ichiza)

The Myoko Ichiza is recited at the temple, at a parishioner's home, and during various ceremonial services. What are the significances and the objectives of reciting the Myoko Ichiza?

The Myoko Ichiza, authored by Nissen Shonin in 1878, is a ceremonial bible of HBS. Its contents are as follows:

- Summary Formula of Penitence (Sosange Mon)
- Invocation of the Buddha and the Saints (Kanjo Mon).
- Transfer of Merits (Eko Mon)
- Gratitude for the Buddha's Teachings/Vows (Zuiki Mon)
- Chapters of the Lotus Sutra (Hondai)

The above are the main six formulas. Added to them are the following:

- The Supernatural Powers of the Tathagata
- Nyosetsu Shugyo Sho
- A Verse from the Lotus Sutra (Nichigachige)
- Homage Formula to the Buddha and the Saints (Namukuon No Mon)
- Recitation of the Sacred Formula in slow rhythm.

Homage Formula to the Buddha and the Saints.

This formula was established in 1878, 20 years after the establishment of Hommon Butsuryu Shu (HBS) in 1858. It is presumed that the ceremonial practices of Hommon Hokkeshu Sect were followed in the interim period, however, unlike the Hokke Shu Sect's core of reciting sutras, HBS mainly chanted the Odaimoku. It is believed that the Formulas of Penitence, Invocation of the Buddha and Saints, Gratitude for the Buddha's Teaching, and Vow, were recited at ceremonial sessions even before 1878.

Reciting Attitude:

There are two basic (verbal) practices in Buddhism. One is the main practice of chanting the Odaimoku, and the other, a subsidiary practice of reciting sutras. What, then, is HBS's main practice? Needless to say, it is the chanting of the Odaimoku. Therefore, the Myoko Ichiza that starts with a Penance is a subsidiary practice.

What are the motivation and objective of reciting the Myoko Ichiza?

Nissen Shonin stated:"The formulas of the One Session of the Fine Dharma is to support the Odaimoku, to understand the Chinese characters as rendered into Japanese, and to prepare the practitioners with a knowledge and understanding that the chanting is equivalent to eradicating sins".

The Myoko Ichiza is recited to show gratitude to the Odaimoku that was entrusted to Jyogyo Bodhisattva by the Buddha. Therefore, when chanting the Myoko Ichiza, one should be very aware of its meaning.

For example, reciting the Formulas of "Mushiirai" and "Nyorai Metsugo" is equivalent to a warm-up exercise before an athlete engages in the main event. It should be understood that reciting the Myoko Ichiza alone without the Odaimoku would yield no results (benefits and merits).

A prayer session 40 to 50 minutes long (equivalent to burning one incense stick) commences with the reciting of Mushiirai and Nyorai Metsugo formulas;the chanting the Odaimoku, then, reciting of the Namukuon formula, and ends by repeating, once again, the Mushiirai formula. However, if only 10 minutes can be spared, recite only the Mushiirai formula and the Odaimoku.

Composition of Myoko Ichiza:

The Myoko Ichiza that Nissen Shonin composed is an original ritual (ceremonial) system of HBS, but it also follows the basic Buddhist teachings of "Repentance" (Sange); Invocation of the Buddha (Kanjo); Merit transference (Eko); The joy which follows the act of hearing or seeing something good (Zuiki), and Vow (Hotsugan). An ordinary person can recite them without guidance from a priest.

We first recite the Formula of Penitence by facing the Gohonzon to atone for the various sins that we have accumulated from our past life. This is Penetance (Sange).

Next, we recite a portion of the most important teachings of Great Master Nichiren Shonin's teaching, the Treatise Revealing the Spiritual Contemplation and the Object of Worship (Kajin Honzon Sho) requesting the attendance of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and the Guardian Kings of Heaven. It is then followed by reciting the Formulas of Namukuonhonji and Namutomon. This is to request Nichiren Shonin, Nichiryu Shonin, and other Great Masters to watch over them (Kanjo Mon).

Then, the "Transfer of Merits Formula" is recited. This is to request that the power of virtuous merits be transferred to our ancestors so that their spiritual soul is rescued;and that one's merits of chanting the Odaimoku be shared with other practitioners to improve the faith together. It can also be transferred to other non-believers to awaken them to the religion.

Thereafter, the Formula of Gratitude for the Buddha Teachings (Zuiki Mon) is recited. This is to express gratitude for being able to encounter this religion and attain its merits.

Lastly, the "Formula of Vow" (Hotsugan Mon) is recited. This is to request that various people be converted into the HBS religion so they can become Bodhisattvas.

As stated before, the Myoko Ichiza is easy to understand.

If one can understand the meaning of the various "Formulas of the One Session of the Fine Congregation" they can comprehend the basic teachings of HBS.

Reciting Nyosetsu Shugyo Sho, Jinriki Hon, and Namukuon No Mon:

Nyosetsu Shugyo Sho

The Nyosetsu Shugyo Sho was written by Nichiren Shonin in May 1273, at the age of 52, for his disciples and his believers. The parishioners that uphold the Odaimoku, entrusted to Jyogyo Bodhisattva, and practice the teachings of the Buddha in its true form are the sincere persons of the period of the last Dharma. It is a teaching that encourages its practitioners to carry out its teachings despite any suffering or hardship that they may encounter.

Nissen Shohin proclaimed that the most important documents of Great Master Nichiren are the following three manuscripts:a).The Treatise Revealing the Spiritual Contemplation and the Object of Worship (Kanjin Honzon Sho). b).The Four Types of Teachings and Five Types of Practices (Shishin Gohon Sho). c). The True Way of Practicing the Teachings of the Buddha (Nyosetsu Shugyo Sho).

The recitation of Nyosetsu Shugyo Sho is included in Oko services. Nissen Shonin stated:"Among various types of teachings, there is a way to practice the true teachings of the Buddha. That is the Nyosetsu Shugyo Sho. Unless one constantly reads and understands this teaching, it is difficult to spread it to help others". (HBS Important Writings 4. HBS Document 817).

The formula of the divine or Supernatural power of Tathagata (Nyorai Jinriki Hon)

The Formula of the Divine or Supernatural Power of Tathagata is Chapter 21 of the Lotus Sutra. This chapter elucidated that the Eternal Buddha's enlightenment wrapped in the Odaimoku was entrusted to Jyogyo Bodhisattva, and is included in the "Three Thousand Realms in One Mind" (Ji no Ichinen Sanzen). It means that all phenomena in this world (sanzen) are included in one thought (ichinen). Later, Jyogyo Bodhisattva, in the name of Great Master Nichiren, appeared in this world of the Last Dharma to spread the Odaimoku that is attached to the Divine or Supernatural Power of the Tathagata.

In that manner, Chapter 21 is the most important teaching among the 28 Chapters of the Lotus Sutra. Thus, it is important to know that this formula contains the enlightenment of the Buddha's teachings and we should recite it with gratitude.

The recitation of the Jinriki Hon is the utmost spreading of the Odaimoku. This formula is not recited during ordinary Oko services. The most important thing is the chanting of the Odaimoku.

Homage Formula to the Buddha and the Saints (Namukuon no Mon):

This formula was authored by Nichizo Shonin, a disciple of Nichiren Shonin. It is recited at the end of a ceremonial service. Nissen Shonin, after making two or three amendments to it, included it in the Myoko Ichiza. This passage asks that the merits of the Odaimoku be passed on to our ancestors and teachers and they be protected by the various Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Guardian Kings of Heaven.

3

How to O-Kyuji (to adorn the altar, Gohonzon)

Why are incense Sticks Offred?

What is the meaning and significance of burning incense sticks at the altar to Gohonzon?

Incense sticks are offered at the altar to provide a pleasant aroma for Buddha. The burning of incense sticks is one form of ritual used during memorial services for the deceased. From ancient times, Buddhist regarded the offering of incense and flowers as an important task for memorial services. The number of incense sticks, offered during service, varies among Buddhist sects. Some sects require that more than one incense stick be used during their services.

The practitioners of HBS are required to offer only one incense stick while conducting prayer services at their altar every morning and night, keeping in mind to offer a stick with a fragrant aromas.

Why are floweres offered?

In his late years, Buddha Shakyamuni silently twisted a flower in the presence of his disciples and smiled. Priest Kasho, the 1st disciple of Buddha Shakyamuni noticed Buddha's action and immediately understood the message which was being conveyed to him and to the other disciples. Buddha, by the twisting of a flower, was warning his disciples of his impending death. He also wished his teachings be spread by his disciples after his death.

As you can infer from this story, the flower is a symbol of life for Buddha. Flowers offered to the altar must be fresh. Do not leave withered flowers on the altar. Leaving withered flowers is blasphemous to Buddha and the Scripture (Mandala). It is important to offer fresh flowers.

What is the signifficance of candles? Why is a lamplight lit at all times?

Flowers symbolizes Buddha's life and mercy. The lamplight symbolizes Buddha's wisdom of enlightenment. We offer flowers to express our gratitude for Buddha's benevolence.

In Chapeter One of the Lotus Sutra, it is said that Buddha emitted a bright light beam from his brow which shined eighteen hundred territories to the east.

The light from his brow indicates that all things, happenings and realities contained in the fundamental truth (the true form of existence in this world) have been clarified by Buddha's wisdom of enlightenment. As the light is a symbol of Buddha's "Chie" (working of the mind so as to capture the true nature of reality, and then to realize the truth, or wisdom of enlightenment) We should recall the significance of the light and pray that Buddha's "Chie" be passed on to us. When we light the candles, the incense sticks, or during the cleaning of the altar.

The lamplight should always be kept on because the world of Buddha is a bright, shining place. Therefore, it is inappropriate to keep the altar in darkness.

Nissen Shonin said, "To keep the altar clean at all times and to offer incense sticks, flowers and rice (in the case of Japan) are ultimately for your own benefit because you will in return recieve the merits of the Lotus Sutra and good fortunes."

Why is the flint used?:

From ancient times in Japan, showering a person or things with sparks from a flint and steel is a symbolism of purification. HBS, as a form of etiquette, customarily uses the flint and steel to shower things offered to the altar with sparks for purification purpose. To use it, hold the flint in your right hand and strike it against the steel held in your left hand. There is no need to use the fiint toward the Mandala or the statue of Nichiren Shonin, because they are pure in themselves.

The flint is used for the following situations.

1. When incense sticks and candles are being lit.
2. When flowers are offerd or exchanged.
3. When rice, water, and other things are offered.
4. When cleaning the altar. In this case let the sparks fly from the flint all around the altar.

From it's origin, HBS considers that the following routine service is an important functron. It is the fundamental basis of our religion. It is presumed that you are aware of how it should be done, but, often, the following things are ignored or neglected.

1. Are necessary utensils, such as, duster, wiping cloth, mask, fiint and, matches readily available?
2. Water should be offered first thing in the morning.
3. It is improper to wear casual clothes, such as shorts or T shirts, during dusting/wiping of the altar.
4. Do not keep shriveled flowers or offensive smelling water in the flower vase.
5. Be sure to clean the top of the altar, the back and, periodically, the drawers of the altar.
6. Be sure that all of the designs on the equipment of the altar is facing you and are neatly arranged.

Why is the sound of a metal bell necessary?

The sound of the bell is to signal the beginning and ending of the praying session.

In short, with so many people praying at once, the ringing of the bell is to signify the start and ending of the praying. The ringing of the bell is not used for that purpose only. The vibration from the sound of the bell has the effect of guiding the souls of the people into a better and more respectful world. Not only is the sound of the bell heard by the practitioners gathered at the service, but also the Buddha, the future buddhas and other divinities embodied in the Mandala.

The bell is used to draw their attention to listen to your request. The bell is rung with the purpose of requesting the "taste of the Darhma" be accepted (the Buddhist law is so called because it delights anyone

who recieves it).

In the old sutra, it is explained that, "The voice, penetrating to hell, to a hungry spirit, to the creatures belonging to the sub-human species, will remove the suffering of the unseen beings and, ringing of the bell, at the time of death will create a better soul." It is said that the sounding of the bell during services will reach the departed souls, and will arouse the soul of enlightenment in the person who is facing death. Therfore, while praying at home, the bell should be rung courteously, keeping in mind the aforementioned reasons.

Why is Water Offered?

Water is the symbol of mercy.

What is the meaning of taking water every morning from the faucet and offering it at the alta to the Gohonzon?

If fire is the symbol of the wisdom of enlightenment of Buddha, water is the symbol of the mercy of Buddha. The reason why fire is considered to be Buddha's wisdom of enlightenment is because fire burns out the souls of illusions (*Bonno) and purifies them. The reason why Buddha's enlightenment of mercy is compared to water is because water moistens and cultivates everything. At the same time, water is compared to Buddha's enlightenment. A clear pool of water mirros images with colors and forms. Because water possesses these characteristics, it has been compared to Buddha's wisdom of mercy. In other words it means that Buddha can understand each individual's state of affairs and can provide help accordingly. The water offered at the altar becomes the water of blessings containing the wisdom of enlightenment and mercy after the chanting of the "Odaimoku" is completed. The water (okozui) should be drunk and not be disposed of. Throwing it away is sinful.

*Bonno: Evil Passion, Illusions

Those mental conditions which disturbs the mind.

They are divided into basic and derivative types.

Basic illusions: Covetousness, anger, ignorance, arrogance, doubt, false views.

Derivative types: Idleness, indolence, disbelieve, Iow-spiritedness, restlessness, shamelessness, non-bashfulness, anger, concealment, stinginess, envy, affliction, injury, enmity, deceit, fraudulence, arrogance and drowsiness.

Why are wooden xylophones and wooden clappers used?

HBS is the originator of wooden xylophones and wooden clappers. Why does HBS strike the wooden xylophones or clappers during their services?

The wooden xylophone is two parallel rectangular pieces of wood on a tray placed on a "Kyozukue" (a table for the altar), which is beaten with a small wooden or plastic hammer. The wooden clappers (Hyoshigi) are two, separete pieces of wood 15cm-20cm long and 2-3cm in diameter, which is loosely held in each hand, grasped around the center and beaten continuously for sound. The hands holding the clappers are placed in front of the chest. Among the parishioners, there are some who place their clappers on their thighs, but that is disrespectful and is not recommended. The wooden xylophone and clappers are simultaneously beaten during the service to maintain rhythm and used to coordinate the "Odaimoku", which is being chanted and also during the recitation of the "Nyosetsu-shugyo-sho" (practices as prescribed) and "Kuonge" (Homage Formula to the Buddha and the saints).

The xylophone is mainly beaten by the presiding priest and sounds louder than the clapper. The sounds from each wooden instrument should be around the same loudness.

Since the xylophone and clapper are to be beaten for the purpose of maintaining rhythm during the chanting. They should not beaten so loudly as to they drown out the voices of the chanting of the "Odaimoku". Also, during the beating of the instruments, body movement should be kept to a minimum. Swaying of the head or body should be avoided. One should strive to chant the "Odaimoku" with a good posture.

Nissen Shonin stated; "The beating of the wooden clapper is to assist the chanting. The beating of the wooden clapper should not be too loud and noisy. The chanting of the Odaimoku should be accomplished earnestly so it vibrates to the outsiders and gives them the feeling of hearing something good and the joys which follow."

Why is cooked rice offered in Japan?

From ancient times in Japan, rice has been the staple food of the Japanese people. In other words, it has been the life provision. So, leaving aside the offering of other things, rice is offered every day to express our reverence in form and appearance. The Mandala appreciates our feeling of reverence. Also, raw rice (in bags) is offered at the temple's altar by the parishioners as an expression of kindness to the departed souls.

For parishioners in America or other countries, offering such things as fruits, cakes, beer, boxes of candies would be appropriate.

Why is rosary held?:

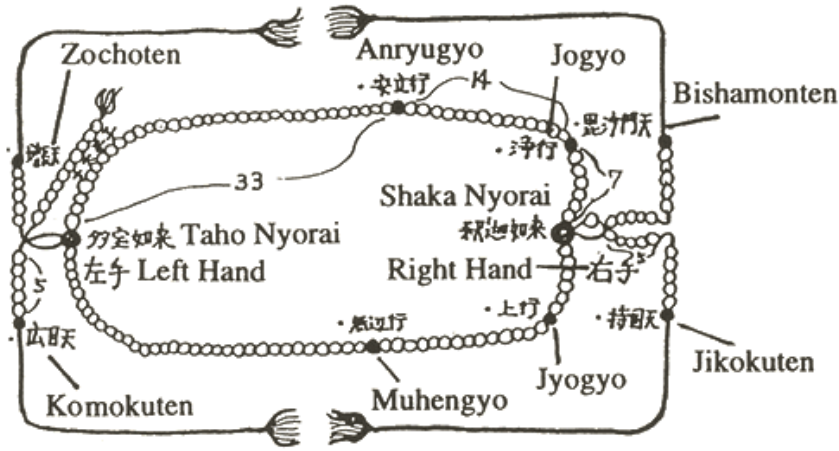
Rosary is also referred to as "Nenzyu". From ancient time in India, the rosary was used as a worshipping tool during service for Buddha and future buddhas.

An ordinary rosary has 108 beads, but there are rosaries with 54 and 27 beads.

The number, 108, represents the number of evil passions that human beings possess and wish to eradicate. The 54 beads represents the number of teachings the future buddha must master to advance and 27 represents the number of saints.

Ordinarily, the beads used for a rosary are seeds from the fruit of the Bodhi tree but crystals or corals are used also. The rosary of HBS, shown in the attached diagram, has two large beads, one representing Buddha Shakyamuni and the other, Taho Buddha, and connected between them are two strands of small beads. Connected to the two large beads are two tufts. Most of the rosaries of other Buddhist sects are similar to HBS's, but the most noticeable differnce of HBS's rosary is the two tufts which are a little longer in length. Nichiren Shonin adopted them to differentiate it from other rosaries.

HONMONBUTSURYUSHU ROSARY



As stated earlier, the small beads represents the 108 evil passions that human beings possess. The four identically colored beads among the strands of small beads represents the four future Buddhas; Jogyo, Muhengyo, Anryugyo, and Jogyo (same pronounciation as the first, but the kanji different). The tear-drop-shape-colored beads in the tufts represents the four guardian kings of the Lotus Sutra, Jikokuten in the east, Zochoten in the south, Komokuten in the west, and Bishamonten in the north. The ten beads in one of the tufts represents the ten main disciples of Buddha.

In this manner, the rosary represents our evil passions and at the same time, represents our desire and need to rely on the Mandala. One should not forget that our evil passions can be eliminated and we can learn to live in the ways of Buddha. At the same time, one should not forget the wisdom of enlightenment of Buddha, the future buddhas and other deities. This is why we hold the rosary. It is like the soul which enables one to practice religion. Consequently, one must handle the rosary with care and respect.

4

Why Is Worshipping Important?

Mind and Body

"Please attend Oko services" .
"Endeavor to visit the temple"
"Participate in study sessions"

HBS is very strict about their parishioners visiting the temple and participating in their activities. There is no other religion beside HBS that is so strict. Why is this?

There are four reasons:

Buddhism originally placed importance on practices. A religion that does not engage in practices is not Buddhism. There are two forms of practices in Buddhism. One is placing a great emphasis on the mind; a meditation practice (Kannen Kampo) to discipline, polish, and enhance attainment of enlightenment through concentration. The other is a practice by mouth and body. It is a practice using the mouth to chant the Odaimoku, and the body to visit the temple and attend Oko services.

An instructive poem of Nissen Shonin stated: "In the age of the last Dharma, one's faculty to engage in severe practices is lacking, Thus, one should not attempt to understand enlightenment by mind, but to use the body to accumulate merits in this age (of the Last Dharma) by visiting the temple".

Using the body to visit the temple, chanting the Odaimoku by mouth, and listening to sermons are the first reason.

One attends a school to pursue one's studies or hobbies. The purpose of visiting the temple and participating in Oko services is to pursue knowledge about HBS's religion. This is the second reason.

"Why is it necessary to visit the temple or Oko services when we can chant the Odaimoku before the altar and save time traveling?"

Chanting the Odaimoku at home is a fundamental duty of a practitioner, but by doing only this, you deny yourself sermons and this becomes a self-style practice. By neglecting to listen to sermons, a soul of distrust and doubt will arise. A visit to the temple is important from that standpoint. This is the third reason.

An older or middle-aged person sitting idly at home increases his chances of becoming senile. Men must use their brain and body to keep fit. Similarly, by not engaging in religious practices, listening to sermons and communicating with others, one will become religiously senile. This is the fourth reason.

The legs are for the purpose of walking. Do not use them for the pursuit of greed. Use them to accumulate merits.

The following are the teachings of Nissen Shonin concerning temple visits:

> *Use the legs to visit the temple for religious practices, and the mouth to chant Namumyohorengekyo." These are the basic practices of HBS.*
>
> *The legs are active for leisure purposes, but weak for visiting the temple or Oko services.*
>
> *Depending on one's degree as to whether they do or don't visit the temple or attend Oko services acts as a barometer.*

An Oko activity is an important function of HBS

"O" is an honorific. "Ko" means a prayer and lecture—meeting session. It is not a gathering for religious debauchery. An "Oko" session is a gathering of parishioners to pray and chant the Odaimoku conscientiously, to listen to Buddlnst teachings (Gohonzon),announcing merit rewards received from the altar by an individual, and to spread the teachings of HBS to others. In other words, it is a school teaching Buddhist doctrines. Based on Nissen Shonin's proposal, Oko is now being held at least once a month at various homes comprised of small groups of parishioners who are divided into various districts. It is not only confined to the temple. As a parishioner of HBS, to conduct a "Oko" service in their home is proper. However, if it is more convenient, a group Oko may be alternately held at the homes of members at least once or twice a month by means of assigning a "Ganshu" (the person responsible for holding the service in their home). At such time, tithe is offerd to the priest. Some parishioners are under the impression that a tithe serves as means of merit—transference for their ancestors or prayer for their wishes. That is not so. The primary purpose of an Oko is to pray for the promotion to teach others. Of course, by chanting the Odaimoku in unison by the parishioners, it acts as a salvation for the soul of the ancestors and to build merits for the safety of members of each family. But, do not waste the time to talk about trivial matters after the service. The time should be utilized to discuss ways and means to improve the groups' activities for the betterment of the temple and to spread the teachings to others and aiding those who are suffering.

Let me elaborate on two or three other small items. They are the same for home or temple conditions, so please conform to it:

1. Arrive at Oko ten minutes before the designated time, and while awaiting for the arrival of the priest(s), be chanting the Odaimoku.
2. Sit nearer to the altar in the order of arrival.
3. Chant the Odaimoku clearly and in a loud voice.
4. The priest is representing you when offering a prayer, so, press your palms together, and listen carefully to what is being offered (Gonjo).
5. Listen carefully to sermons, and try to comprehend the meaning of "Gokyoka" (Verse or poems of religious instruction) and "Goshinan" instruction). Taking notes is recommended.
6. Ingroup Oko, each attending member is a "Ganshu", and the prayer being offered is for each individual, so when a tithe is made to the priest, everyone should express their appreciation together.

A HBS Oko cannot be imitated by other sects. It is a unique, independent and worthy system of HBS.

Recently, an interest in holding an Oko among parishioners has been declining. It is very important, therefore, to remind yourself of the purpose for what the Oko is held and attempt to hold it in your home at least once a year. Also, parishioners should try to attend other parishioners' Oko as much as possible.

"Plan your time, either from work or an errand, to fit an Oko in your schedule to express your gratitude to the altar. When one experiences a lack of interest in attending an Oko, an evil spirit had entered your soul in an attempt to block you from going. Try to overcome that pressure and force yourself to attend." stated Nissen Shonin.

It is more important to think about building virtues rather than profits. Therefore, try to avoid doing businesses on the day of an Oko, and attempt to participate in the various religious services.

5

Donations (Fuse), Offerings (Kuyo)

The meaning of donations, offerings, and sustaining:

Priest: Let us study the meaning of Donations, and Offerings. What comes to your mind when you hear these words?

Q: Fuse is asociated with the monetary gifts given to a priest and offerings with the food offered to the participants after an Oko service.

A: I believe so. The public's generally accepted idea of a "Donation" is offering money to a priest. On the other hand, the general public's use of the word, "Kuyo" means offering words and services for the respose of the souls of the deceased. However, words have a very deep meaning. First of all, donation is equivalent to the Sanskrit word, Da—na, of ancient India. It means the act of giving to others materialistic and spiritual aid.

Q: Is it always money?

A: No. The word Fu in Fuse means to "donate". That is, anything donated to aid others. In Buddhism, "donation" can be divided into three main classifications:

1. Wealth Donation (Zai Se):Donating one's assets, such as money and property, for the sake of spreading the religion, and not necessarily making a donation to a Head Priest or other priests, but also to aid others.
2. Religious Donation (Hosse):For spreading the teachings of the Buddha.
3. Veneration Donation (Mu I Se):Doing voluntary service in times of (materialistic, spiritual) calamities and sufferings.

Q: Are sermons provided by a priest considered as religious donations?

A: A priest delivers his sermon to the best of his ability to educate the participants on religious teachings, but, some parishioners leave that "religious donation" at the temple and depart without taking it with them.

Q: Is warning the parishioners about their slanderous act or negligence during religious services, to advise them to improve their religious practices, and to attend other parishioners services, considered as "veneration donations"?.

A: Yes. Next, let's discuss, "An offering" (Kuyo). This isn't merely an offering of food or a prayer mass

for the deceased. It is serving the three treasures (San Bo); of Buddha, of Dharma, and of Priest. It means to perform pure practices in return for protection by the Buddha and previous Great Masters. Kuyo can be divided into two aspects: 1) donation categories; Asset Donation and Religious Donation; and 2) three categories of practices, "Body, Mouth, and Mind";or "Benefit, Respect, and Practice".

Q: The "Asset Donation" and "Religious Donation" seem to have similar meanings, but what is "Benefit Donation?"

A: "Benefit Donation" is not a donation of merchandize or money. It has the same significance as "Asset Donation". In other words, everything that we do for the sake of the religion or assisting others is a Benefit Donation".

A: Let's leave the discussions on donation and offerings and go on to study the fundamental intention of Nissen Shonin's Instructive Poems. What do you think are the significance and objective of "Donation" and "Offerings"?

Q: Aren't they to accumulate merits?

A: Yes.

"Through Offerings practices
Practitioners of the Lotus Sutra
Can receive good fortune in this present world".

The practice of "Donation" and "Offering and Sustaining" is never a one—way street. Its rare merits will always be returned to oneself. From that standpoint, the significance and objective of "Donation" and "Offering and Sustaining" are to accumulate merits. But there is one other thing that one should keep in mind. Greed is part of human nature. And indeed, a civilization can flourish through greed. Can greed be viewed as bad or evil?

"The word greediness embodies
Many seeds of pain and sufferings"

said Shakyamuni Buddha.

If one acts on greed, it will do more harm than good. That is why Shakyamuni Buddha warned that one should control his desires of greed. The practice of "Donation" and "Offering and Sustaining" is to get rid of greediness that lies deep in one's soul.

Q: The significance and objective in engaging in the practice of "Donation" and "Offering and Sustaining" are not only to recive merits but also to get rid greediness in our souls.

Attitude of mind is important

A: "Offerings" is Pujana in Sanskrit. Pujana means to respect.

Q: That is to say, to express your gratefulness to the Buddha, the Dharma, and the Priest by action, isn't it?

A: Exactly. If one does not make donations with a soul of reverence, the merits provided by the Gohonzon will be minimal. An Instructive Poem elucidated:

Even if one does not have assets
By having an intention to give
The merits will be deeper than a large ocean

The most important aspect of "Donation" and "Offerings" is based on the donor's intention when making the contributions. Are you aware of the following story? Shakyamuni Buddha was to arrive in a village late at night. Each villager decided to donate a candle so that they could welcome him by lighting up the roadside. The wealthiest villager contributed thousands of candles to the cause. There was a woman in the village who also wanted to make a contribution but did not have the money to buy a single candle. In order to accomplish her wish, she sold her precious hair in exchange for money and purchased a single candle.Night came, and just as Shakyamuni Buddha and his followers were about to enter the village by the light of burning candles, a strong wind suddenly came and blew out all but the one candle that was donated by the poor woman.It is elucidated in the Buddhist Doctrine, that this poor woman received good fortunes in this present world and was given the name, Komyo Tathagata for the future world.

Q: It is truly proof of the aforementioned Instructive Poem, isn't it?

Having an intention

A: There should be no misapprehension or misunderstanding about having a good intention. It is important to show how one wants to make an offering. The underlying intent of an offering should not be connected to the size of monetary donations or materialistic contributions. There is a saying, "If one has a heart, its color will appear on the surface". The extent of the offerings should be commensurate with the donor's ability according to their religious devotion and financial condition. Are you familiar with the names, Millionaire Shudatsu (Shudatta) or Tokusho Doji? Shudatsu was a wealthy man (when Shakyamuni Buddha was alive) and a Cabinet Minister of King Hashinoku. After hearing Shakyamuni Buddha's sermon at the Chikurin Shoja Temple around the King's Castle, Shudatsu became deeply involved in the religion and relied upon the Buddha. Since he wanted the Buddha to preach his teachings in his country, he purchased a forest owned by Prince Gita where he built a temple, Gionshoja, and invited Shakyamuni Buddha to it. Shakyamuni Buddha stayed in this region for over 20 years and preached his teachings. Tokusho Doji was a little boy when Shakyamuni Buddha was alive. During Shakyamuni Buddha's pilgrimage in the area of the King's Castle, this little child sincerely wanted to make an offering to the Buddha. He made a mud pie from sand and offered it to the Buddha. It is recorded in a Buddhist document that Tokusho Doji through his sincere intent, received the merit of becoming the Great King Aiku in the future world. "Reverend Ishioka Nichiyo, the 17th Head Priest of HBS, during his service at another temple, stated the following as it pertained to Shudatsu and Tokusho Doji:" Receiving a merit by an adult imitating a child, or a millionaire Shudatsu imitating Doji by offering a pie made out of sand, was questionable. A millionaire is a millionaire. One should make offerings commensurate with his status." "Donations" and "Offering and Sustaining" must be shown by a posture of self—status, form, and real condition. When one's financial condition improves, and faith deepens, offerings should be made accordingly.

Q: Since Doji was a little child, he was able to receive a rare reward by just offering a pie made of sand, but a millionaire making an offering of a single pie is tantamount to trying to fool the Buddha rather than a meritorious contribution, isn't it?

A: An inexperienced fly□weight lifter training with fifty kilogram barbell may be effective, but a heavyweight lifter who may be capable of receiving a gold medal in the Olympics, training with a 50 kilogram barbell would have no effect, would it? This is similar to the practice of the faith, isn't it? At any rate, it is important to make donations and offering with a sense of joy and sincerity. At the same time, it is important to persuade others to do the same. To see those accomplishing virtuous deeds is a joy. Do not stop others making donations or offerings. It would be wrong to do so. Finally, two Instructive Poems relating to "Donation" and "Offering" follows:

Hold on to good fortunes
Release greediness
The opposite to that is act as desires.

A wealthy person is only rich in this world
Use wealth of the benefit of the Land of the Tranquil Light
Your rewards will be extensive.

6

Converting Others To The HBS Religion (Kyoke)

Priest:Kyoke is a practice of converting others to the true faith of the HBS religion through education, influence, and resolution of doubts. Incidentally, on what religious teachings does HBS base its faith?

Q: Isn't it the Lotus Sutra?

A: Yes. The Lotus Sutra is our basic text. Please explain the fundamental basis of faith that Shakyamuni Buddha elucidated in the Lotus Sutra.

Q: We believe he taught it on the basis that there is no discrimination between people and to create a person who possesses a sympathetic soul of compassion and mercy. It is, namely, a Bodhisattva, isn't it?

A: Yes. Shakyamuni Buddha did not provide us with the Odaimoku or the teachings of the Lotus Sutra to satisfy his personal gain or greed. The aim of the Lotus Sutra was to build Bodhisattvas that can spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. What type of person is referred to as Bodhisattvas? The following Instructive Poem stated:

Bodhisattvas, regardless of whether they are laymen or priests,
Are persons who help others.

How can one help? It is stated:

"A parishioner that endeavors to convert others
Is a Bodhisattva".

A: parishioner cannot help others by their own power. They need the aid of the Gohonzon. Converting others to the HBS religion is to have them practice the chanting of the Odaimoku of the Lotus Sutra.

Q: Proselytism is a very important practice to realize the intentions of Shakymuni Buddha and Nichiren Shonin, isn't it?

A: Yes.

The shortest path to receive merits

Q: It seems that we, ordinary people, are practicing the faith to gain personal merits rather than endeavoring to convert others to the religion of HBS.

A: The following Instructive Poems is intended for those persons:

By bestowing merits and virtues on others
Its reward will be returned to you.
When endeavoring to aid others
It is also upon one's own body
Upon converting others
the merits of good deeds will be returned to you.
You will be happy and so will they.

It is said that the practice of converting others will benefit you as well as the converted. Its merits will be returned to you. Why is this the shortest path to gain protection?

Q: Isn't it because it is the main objective of the Buddha and Great Master Nichiren?

A: Yes. That is known as:"The correspondence between the Buddha's power and man's receptivity (Kanno Dokyo)". When the power of the Gohonzon, the Buddha power embodied in the Gohonzon, the power of the Odaimoku and the power of faith of the practitioners all come together, phenomenal merits will appear. One must adjust the channel to that of the Buddha and Great Master Nichiren. If not, the correspondence between the powers of the Buddha or Great Master Nichiren and man's receptivity will not be accomplished. What then is the spirit of the Lotus Sutra and Buddha's true objective? It was stated:

"To spread the five words of the Odaimoku
Is the true objective of the Lotus Sutra".

The core of the teachings of the Lotus Sutra is to chant, Namumyohorengekyo, by oneself and to spread it to others. This is the only religion that can fulfill the will of the Buddha and Great Master Nichiren. Therefore, a person having the soul to convert others was elucidated as follows:

"Having a soul to pray for assistance to convert others
Its wishes will be contained in the prayer.
It is a grateful law in aiding others
As one's wishes are contained therein

Explanation: By proselytizing, your own wishes will unknowingly be granted to you through the correspondence between the Buddha's power and man's receptivity.

Preparations required to convert others

A: Can you elaborate on the steps to be taken to convert others?

Q: Is it to firmly offer a prayer asking for assistance before the Gohonzon?

A: Yes. To convert others cannot be accomplished by one's own power or ability. First of all, a petition must be offered to the Gohonzon asking for assistance and to pray day and night.

Q: We ask the Gohonzon for a "fulfillment of our earnest wishes" or "recovery from illness" without any

hesitation, yet when it comes to converting others, we usually forget to offer a prayer don't we?

A: One should not neglect to offer a prayer to the Gohonzon to convert others and to pray on a daily basis. However, before approaching a person whom you wish to convert, pray at your home or at the temple's altar. In doing so: "By the power of the Odaimoku, one can help others through their effort."

Q: Isn't it important to persuade as many people as possible with perseverance? Some people say, "I cannot think of anyone that I can attempt to convert".

A: Such people should examine carefully some of their associates. There must be someone among them that needs a prayer of "sowing the seeds of Buddhahood" into their soul. An Instructive Poems says:

While having a conversation of current topics
Use it as a key to convert others.

Take an opportunity to convert others during conversations with neighbors or friends.

Q: There are times when an opportunity arises to persuade others to this religion but to accomplish it is extremely difficult.

A: It may be difficult to come out directly and ask, "Would you be interested in becoming a practitioner of the HBS religion?" But undoubtedly, there are many other ways one can approach a person.

Q: Some people have a misconception that they should do it alone when attempting to convert others, but shouldn't it be done through mutual cooperation with other parishioners?

A: Attempting to convert another requires a case—by—case technique. A parishioner should carefully assess the facts and circumstances of the individual before approaching the individual by themselves or with other parishioners. The following is an Instructive Poem, which outlines the basic knowledge that one must have to convert others;

Do not attempt to spread the law by definition.
Just to chant is important,
And to receive merits is important.

In order to be successful in converting others, one must maintain simplicity. It cannot be accomplished by defining complicated teachings of Buddhist doctrines. The power to convert others is to have one imitate them by chanting the Odaimoku and to have them receive merits. An Instructive Poem states:

People of this world who are grateful
Through persuasion, the law will spread.

Attaching provisions to convert others is forbidden. As stated in the following Instructive Poem, doing so always fails:

Do not attach bargaining points
Because people despise this

Only sow genuine religious seeds.

Q: People who are good at converting others share the same characteristics. They are kind and considerate, aren't they?

A: Yes. They have "an atmosphere of a good parishioner of HBS" They are neither eloquent nor have a high social status, yet, strangely, they have a knack of converting others to the religion. Nissen Shonin stated: "A model parishioner who has a reputation of aiding others will attract others to the HBS religion."

Nichiren affiliated sects

There are approximately 40 Nichiren affiliated sects that take into account the flow of Nichiren Shonin's teachings. If the Shinto religious sect are included, the number of sects that chant the Odaimoku is even larger. There are some new religious sects founded after World War II that chant the Odaimoku, but they preach questionable Teachings superstition and vulgar beliefs that are not expounded in Nichiren Shonin's teachings. Following are various traditional religious sects that have been in existence from ancient times:

- Nichiren Shu. Their main temple is Kuonji Temple in Mt. Minobu
- Nichiren Sho Shu, the parent body of Sokka Gakkai.
- Kenpon Hokke Shu.
- Hokke Shu
- Hommon Hokke Shu
- Others

The above mentioned sects and others have strayed away from one or more of the teachings of Nichiren Shonin. Consequently, based on the following reasons they are not considered to be true religious sects.

1. Degrading the Doctrine.
   Nichiren Shonin clearly elucidated in his writing, "A Treatise Revealing the Spiritual Contemplation and the Object of Worship" (Kanjin Honzon Sho), that the object of worship is bound only by the Primordial Eight Chapters (Hommon Happon) of the Lotus Sutra". However, some of the sects maintain that the Provisional Section (Shakumoh) and the Primordial Sections (Hommon) are equal. Some only persist that Chapter 16, "The Life-span of the Tathagata" is important. That is a mistaken viewpoint.
2. Reciting the Lotus Sutra.
   Nichiren Shonin stated:"Uphold the Odaimoku exclusively and chant it without paying attention to other passages. Reciting the Lotus Sutra is not permitted". However, some sects hold in contempt the chanting of the Odaimoku and places emphasis on reciting the Lotus Sutra in a singsong manner.
3. Random Enshrinement:
   In contrast to the teachings of Nichiren Shonin that the Odaimoku is the sole object of worship, some sects display icons of other Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, and Guardian Kings of Heaven. Such an act is slandering the Dharma. Other Nichiren affiliated sects display many different kinds of figures, such as Daikoku Ten, Bishamon Ten, Kishimojin and Inari to suit their whims.
4. Merit Transference.
   They forget about Buddhism's true intention and Nichiren Shonin's teachings about Bodhisattva practices. Other sects' main objectives are engagement in merit transference and funeral services only.

Nissen Shonin's Instructive Verse elucidated:"Do not be mislead or be confused by sects that call themselves as Nichiren Sect. That is not a true Nichren Shu Sect". This phrase does not mean one should directly give all his attention to embracing the Lotus Sutra and to studying it thoroughly from Chapter 1 to 28. It means one should uphold the Odaimoku exclusively without paying attention to other passages in the Lotus Sutra and to recite it in its entirety is prohibited.

Soka Gakkai (S.G.I)

Among the newly formed religious groups, Soka Gakkai was criticized for its back-handed activities and cult-like practices, but it grew into a mammoth religious group.

Soka Gakhai, formerly known as Soka Academic Institute, first began its activities as an academic group founded by Tsunesaburo Makiguchi in the Taisho Era (1920) in Japan. Later, it was integrated into the Nichiren Sho Shu Sect and began it's religious activities as a lyman group.

In 1900, the Nichiren Sho Shu Sect separated from the Hommon Shu Sect that followed the teachings of Nikko Shonin, one of the six senior disciples of Nichiren Shonin.

It was a small and weak religious group that consisted of approximately 20,000 members in the Taisho Era. Moreover, when the Gakkai's internal affairs led by Makiguchi became degenerated, it instantly began to fall into a fix of hatred. For a while, Nichiren Sho Shu Sect lent Soka Gakkai a space under their "eaves", but the latter eventually stole the whole house.

Soka Gakkai without reserve declared publicly that other sects are heretical religion, but examining Soka Gakkai objectively it can be seen that it has the following shortcomings.

1. They assert only the Odaimoku of Chapter 16, "The Life Span of the Tathagata". That is a mistaken viewpoint. It is in direct contrast to the teaching of Nichiren Shonin who asserted that the Odaimoku is restricted to the Primordial Eight Chapters (Hommon Happon) of the Lotus Sutra.
2. Initially, Soka Gakkai maintained that the original and true Scripture was the wooden Mandala displayed at the Fuji Taisekiji Temple given to Yashiro Kunishige by Nichiren Shonin. Among Japanese scholars of religion, Yashiro Kunishige is a fictitious person. Later, it became apparent through the scholars' researches that the wooden mandala was an imitation. Some officials within Soka Gakkai claimed: "We had been fooled by Daisaku Ikeda" about the wooden mandala.
3. They claimed the only successor of Nichiren Shonin was Nikko Shonin. Historical facts, however, do not support that belief. It can be said that it was selfwilled and for self-praise only.
4. It can be said that Soka Gakkai of today is a political group rather than a religious organization. Their motive to engage in missionary work is to broaden their political territory. They have misinterpreted Nichiren Shonin's spirit by moving into a direction most hated by Nichiren Shonin. To gain political power (influence) was contrary to Nichiren Shonin's desire.

Explain the above-mentioned items to former Soka Gakkai's members when you are introducing them to the HBS religion.

Christianity

Christianity is a traditional religion that was founded about 2,000 year ago by Jesus Christ. It is one of the three greatest religions in the world besides Buddhism and Islam.

Their figure of worship is God who is said to have created the world in six days.

However, following are some inconsistent views elucidated in the Bible:

1. Christianity views conflict with the "Theory of Evolution" that was established by the scientific community.
2. If all existences, including human beings, were the creation of God and if he is truly almighty and filled with compassion, why did he not create a peaceful world without evils and sufferings. Christianity elucidates that God created human beings modeled after Him, but in that case why are the people too greedy and ignorant? It can be said that the world of human beings is full of strife and impiety. It can be said that God is not a God of love but a God of misfortunes.

Christianity espouses that the evil world of human beings was caused by Adam and Eve's degeneration. If so, why did he create them in the first place? What would be their answer?

There is much to learn from the activities of Christian organizations and on the part of its parishioners, but it can be said that Christianity is not a true religion that can relieve sufferings from humanity. It is full of discrepancies and lacks the most important factor, The Object of Worship.

Nichiren Shonin, when calmly sitting at the site of his execution in Tatsunokuchi, he smiled and expressed "joy of being executed". But, by some miracle occurrence the executioner was unable to behead him. On the other hand, Christ at time of his execution shouted in a tragic voice, "God, are you deserting me?

Tell the people who seek membership in HBS about the differences between Buddhism and Christianity, that Jesus was executed whereas Nichiren Shonin was saved from being executed.

General rules of subduing when converting people of other religious sects

First of all, be careful in your choice of words. No matter how wrong other religions may be, the person engaged in it is devoted. Thus, it is not advisable to unilaterally criticize the religion of others. Do it in a fashion that will not hurt their pride.

Secondly, to menbers of other religion, acknowledge their merits. However, the finer points of the HBS religion should also be explained to them.

To take an attitude of impartiality is advisable. On the other hand, be adamant about expressing the differences between the religion of HBS and other religions that are engaged in superstition and vulgarity.

To members of other religions that resort to reasons that "my religion also provides benefits", acknowledge it by saying that it alright. However, explain to them that HBS provides salvation to all mankind and will eradicate sins accumulated from the past life and can take a meritorious soul into the future world is through its practices in this present world.

Nissen Shonin's Instructive Poem:

When attempting to convert others
Speak softly and avoid aggressive expressions
Do it in a fashion whereby they will be able to understand it.

Superior Points of HBS

When talking to members of another religion, point out the following factors that the religion of the Lotus Sutra is superior in comparison to other religions.

Firstly, to people that are not practicing the faith of Buddhism, emphasize the teachings of salvation for the three worlds (past, present and future) elucidated in the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha and the

Lotus Sutra. That is, eradication of one's sins from the past world and to receive beneficial changes from a fixed destiny in this present world and to obtain salvation of the spirit for the future world. This is only expounded in Buddhism.

When talking to others, determine if their religion expounds the salvation for the three worlds. If not, use it as a basis for attempting to convert others to the HBS religion. To members who rely upon the sutras of other Buddhist religions, tell them that there are various types of teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha like there are various kinds of glasswares and pottery. But to that end, emphasize that the Lotus Sutra is the most supreme and true teaching and, naturally, it awardes merits to its diligent practitioners.

Some people misunderstand that Nichiren Shonin is the sole preacher who believes that the Lotus Sutra is supreme. To those people, explain that the various Buddhist sutras of other religion elucidated piecemeal Shakyamuni Buddha's enlightenment, but the Lotus Sutra contains the complete composite teaching of Shakyamuui Buddha. Thus, the Lotus Sutra has been highly respected by many masters, such as Tendai Daishi, Dengyo Daishi, Shotoku Taishi and other highly regarded saints before Nichiren Shonin's appearance.

Lastly, explain to members of other Nichiren sects that HBS is the only sect that preaches the true teachings of the Lotus Sutra inherited from Shakyamuni Buddha and Nichiren Shonin.

Use as reference the aforementioned clauses about Nichiren Sects and Soka Gakkai when speaking to others about the HBS religion.

Nichiren Shonin's Instruction:

> *Shakyamuni Buddha stated that, among the many teachings, the Lotus Sutra is the most important teaching. I, Nichiren, established this sect based on the Lotus Sutra. Thus, the sect should be called, Busturyu Shu.*

7

Disparaging The Dharma (Hobo) Is Unjust

Q: HBS claims that "Disparaging the Dharma" is unjust. Some parishioners claim that because HBS is too rigid, it is difficult to convert others to the religion. We would like to learn more about this.

A: If HBS allows one to engage concurrently in other religions, HBS' belief of a pure religion that adheres to the true teachings of Buddha and Nichiren Shonin will be compromised.

From that viewpoint, the parishioners of HBS should understand the reason and justification of why "Abusing the Dharma" is unjust.

Abusing the Dharma is censuring it. Nissen Shonin stated that Disparaging the Dharma is rebelling against the true teachings of the Buddha and Great Master Nichiren. Not believing in the Gohonzon of the Lotus Sutra that embodies myriads of elements of all existences, and praying at other temples or possessing figures of their Gods or Buddhas are, effectively, Disparaging the Dharma.

Q: Why there is no heed to revere Gods?

A: All I can say is that there is no necessity to revere other Gods or Buddhas separately. An Instructive Poem elucidated:

What insufficiency is there
Not to support the Dharma
That embodies myriads of elements
Of all existence?

The Gohonzon embodies all Gods, Bodhisattvas, and Guardian Kings of Heaven.Therefore, there is no need to revere other them separately.

Q: Is the decree of our Gohonzon different from the Scriptures other sects revere, such as Amida Buddha, Dainichi Nyorai, and Kannon Buddha?

A: Yes. HBS's Gohonzon is the Dharma Gohonzon. The Dharma Gohonzon is what the Buddha and

Bodhisattvas revered. Their practices were also based upon it. The Dharma provides the life of the Guardian Kings of Heaven. It is the immortal truth of eternal life. Shakyamuni Buddha and all other Buddhas were enlightened by the Dharma from which they attained Buddhahood. In other words, all Buddhas and Bodhisattvas are born through the Dharma.

Q: Was the "Dharma" the Gohonzon of Buddha and Bodhisattvas?

A: Yes. HBS's Gohonzon is the Dharma Gohonzon that the Buddha and Bodhisattvas revered. That is why it is on a different degree from the worship of other sects. Since it is difficult for newly converted practitioners to understand it, the ensuing parable will help to explain it. The Gohonzon of HBS is like a large tree with branches. The branches are Kanzeon Bodhisattva or others, and the leaves are Amida Buddha, Dainichi Nyorai, Kanon Buddha, etc. The trunk of the tree is a Wondrous Dharma.

Q: Displaying and revering a figure of Amida Buddha is analogous to cutting a branch of a tree. It will eventually wither and die. It is injurious to the tree as well.

A: Yes. An Instructive Poem stated:

Laws of the Universe are embodied
In the Fine Dharma
To possess icons of other sect is
Reviling the Gohonzon

Displaying and revering icons of other Gods or Buddhas is making light of the Odaimoku Gohonzon. Thus, it is disparaging the Dharma.

Q: The most difficult aspect of proselytism is to make a newly converted parishioner discard the figures of Gods and Buddhas he has revered in the past.

A: To convince one to discard Hobo possessions is difficult. It must be done cautiously. Do not say, "Throw it away". A good advice is to say, "The spirits of the icons of Buddhas you had displayed and revered in the past are all inclusive in the Odaimoku Gohonzon and it would be the same as praying to them through the Odaimoku. Therefore, all materials and figurines may contribute to Hobo, by HBS standards, should be consigned to their temple."

Do not hold things that look alike

Priest: An important reason not to abuse the Dharma is:

> *By not disposing of materials considered abusive to the Dharma, merits cannot be obtained. If the sky is cleared of clouds, the moon will appear and its beauty can be appreciated.*

Until all the materials considered abusive to the Dharma are discarded, the light of rewards will be deflected and merits will be unobtainable

> *Receiving phenomenal merits depends of one discarding ornaments or charms considered to be Hobo.*

Possessing other sects' amulets will also be an obstacle to receiving rewards. Therefore, it is said:

> *If one wants to receive merits, abandon Hobo. And above all, chant by mouth the Odaimku.*

Q: By the way, to hold amulets of other sects, is of couse abusing the Dharma, but how about displaying ornaments and hanging pictures of Gods or Buddha?

A: It is extremely difficult to make a judgment on that issue. If it is used solely for the purpose of decoration, it may not be construed as abusing the Dharma. However, if those materials are an object of worship or considered an item of spiritual power, then it can be construed as abusing the Dharma. For example, if you believe that a picture brings you good fortune, it is considered to be an object that abuses the Dharma.

Dispose of items that has a likelihood of being an object that abuses the Dharma.

As stated above, wearing a necklace with a cross or displaying ornaments of the Seven Gods of Good Fortune are unadvisable.

A Soul of Prudence is Needed to Avoid Disparaging the Dharma (Hobo)

Q: It is easy to ask for penitence after visiting temples or shrines of other Sects as those acts are known conditions that abuse the Dharma. But isn't it more difficult to become aware of an unconscious soul that disparages the Dharma?

A: Yes, it is. "There are many variations of abusing the Dharma, but, in Nissen Shonin's Instruction, "A soul of distrust and doubt also constitutes abusing the Dharma". Parishioners who feel that they cannot receive rewards or things do not go as they wish, may possess a soul of distrust or self—conceit in the religion. It is best to examine your soul and to repent.

Use of imprudent words

Priest: Other than the "Hobo of Soul", there are the "Hobo of Posing" and the "Hobo of Words". The Posing Hobo is not only confined to visiting shrines and temples, but worshipping various Gods and Buddhas of other sects. An Instructive Poem stated:

Not expressing gratitude
By coming in contact with the Fine Dharma
Is disparaging it.

As stated in the Instructive Poem, there is no need to flirt with religion. Having come in contact with a great religion, to neglect and lead an intemperate life is abusing the Dharma. So, be careful. The "Word Hobo" is speaking ill of the religion or censuring parishioners of the Lotus Sutra. "Preachers of Dharma" (Hosshi Hon) warns of "A bad man who speaks ill of the Buddha in my presence with evil intent for as long as a kalpa is not so sinful. But, it is more sinful to reproach laymen and priests even with a single word of abuse for their reading and reciting the Lotus Sutra"
Accepting the above composition, Nissen Shonin stated:

To speak ill of or to censure a person who upholds the Fine Dharm is a more sinful act than reviling Shakyamuni Buddha.

Q: It seems peculiar that to censure a parishioner that spreads the teachings of Buddha is a greater sin

than speaking ill of the Buddha we esteem. Shouldn't it be the other way?

A: Not so. The Buddha is already in the state of enlightenment. Therefore, it doesn't matter in what form he may be censured or spoken ill of. However, we are basically a common people who get easily upset by words of slander or defamation directed against us. The Buddha, who perceived the weakness of our soul, provided the above—mentioned instruction.

Q: That is Buddha's mercy and compassion, isn't it?

A: Actually, the bottom line is whether parishioners can become united in mind, although separated in body, to refrain from slandering others. Speaking ill of others will eliminate cooperation among parishioners.

Q: It seems like bad—mouthing others is a way of abusing the Dharma.

A: Finally, another instructive poem:

Although one may think
He had done nothing wrong
Neglecting to chant the Odaimoku
Is disparaging the Dharma.

Part III Q and A Session

Karma and destiny

Q: Do Buddha make judgements ?
A: He doesn't. If we possess sins, they were created by oneself rather than being brought about by others. It is only you, who can pass judgements on yourself. Our actions, statements and thoughts, in the course of our daily life, become seeds. These seeds are sowed into our soul, where they are stored as karmas. The bad karmas accumulated over time are referred to as sins (Zaisho).

Q: Some people are born in an extremely fortunate environment. Others carry a heavy doomed fate. Some are healthy, some are sick. Are all of these circumstances caused by karmas?
A: It is a very difficult question to answer. All conditions cannot be claimed as a results of karmas. There is such a thing as karma possessed by each individual. There are common karmas held jointly by families. groups or society. Additionally, matters occur through an interaction complex common karmas of cause and condition. Consequently. it cannot be simply said that it is the cause of karmas.

Q: What is the difference between karma and destiny?
A: Karma is created by oneself rather than by someone else. It is a matter created in the past and in the present for one's future life. After all one's destiny is not determined by someone else who surpass oneself.

Q: What is the process for building karmas?
A: We see, hear, taste and smell, feel pleasantness, unpleasantness cold and warmth by our body. They are referred to as the five senses and through their process our soul functions. In Buddhism, the process is known as the consciousness or the sixth consciousness. The founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, researched the world of unconcsiousness. Buddhism had also elucidated on it. This unconscious world is called Manashiki, or the seventh conscious. Buddhism states that a soul called Arayashiki or the eighth conscious exists in the inner depth of unconsciousness. Everything that we observe, hear, think about or say during our lifetime all become seeds which are planted, stored and recorded in the Arayashiki. The seeds stored in the Arayashiki becomes a spiritual energy which forms our destiny in the immediate future and over into the future life.

Q: Are the seeds recorded in the Arayashiki carried over into the future world even after death?
A: It is a very important question. After death, the six senses and the Manashiki will cease to exist. However, the energy within the Arayashiki will continue to exist. Therefore, the seeds stored in the Arayashiki are carried over into the future life. The bad seeds carried over from the past world that causes our unfortunate life are referred to as offenses (fault) or sins. All of us possess sins from the past world. From that standpoint, we begin our prayer service before the altar by reciting the Summary Formula of Penitence, "In order to eliminate the sins and hinderances that I have accumulated by disparaging the Dharma since the beginningless past, beginning now from the present bodily existence until I obtain the Buddha body, I will uphold the Primodial Sacred Object (the sacred formula, Namumyohorengekyo), the Primodial Altar and the Primodial Practice (Chanting of the Odaimoku)." We then entered into the chanting of the Odaimoku.

What is Dharma?

Q: You stated that one can recieve "visible merits/benefits"(Goriyaku) through practices of HBS religion. What kind of merit is it? Why is it necessary to recieve visible merits?

A: Goriyaku (merits or favorable rewards) must be felt; be conscious (aware) and moved (touched) by it. Some people can feel and become aware of it. Others may be unaware of it. In this case, it is necessary for someone to tell the person that he had received Goriyaku. To recieve merits which can be seen is not the final objective of HBS. By receiving merits one can percieve that the HBS religion is a true religion and become faithful parishioners. In other words, to receive spiritual awakening (enlightenment) is important.As such, a receipt of divine benefits is manifest evidences; benefits which can be seen.

Q: Was the Dharma taught by Shakyamuni Buddha? If not, would the Dharma have not existed in this world?
A: Buddha is a person who was spiritually awakened, or a person who perceived the truth. Dharma is the fundamental true law of this world which Buddha percieved. In this instance, even if Buddha had not appeared in this world, the law would have been perceived since it had existed from the beginningless past. It was Buddha who was awakened to it. We are fortunate that Shakyamuni Buddha was born in this world. If not we would have been unable to meet the Odaimoku religion based on the wonderful Dharma.

Q: What is the relationship between the Buddha, the Dharma and the Odaimoku?
A: The Lotus Sutra elucidated that the principles of the Dharma, the Eternal Buddha and the Odaimoku were not separate entities. They were one body-identical. That is what Shakyamuni Buddha perceived and Nichiren Shonin claimed that the Odaimoku should be the object of worship based on the Dharma.

Q: Is the wonderous Dharma possessed in our Arayashiki?
A: Yes. An identical truth is possessed in our soul, which is known as "Ichinen Sanzen" (Ichinen means a life for one instant or a life of exceedingly short period of time, and sanzen refers to all phenomena in this world. Therefore lchinen Sanzen means all phenomena in this world are included both in our thought for one instant and even in a minute grain of sand). By chanting the Odaimoku, the “Ichinen Sanzen" possessed in our soul is activated and the bad seeds are filtered.
Q: Are our wrongdoings, even in thought, become seeds and stored in the Arayashiki? And, are the bad seeds causing our problematic destinies?
A: Your actions, speech and thoughts all become the seeds that are sowed into the Arayashiki. Therefore. to detest or hate someone will create bad seeds. However, try not to see only the minus side of the principle. By accomplishing good deeds one can build good destinies. This is the teaching of Buddhism.

Q: Are you saying that the present world is connected to the past life and the present life to the future life?
A: Yes. Just like yesterday is connected to today, and today is to tomorrow. It is like an extended spider web stretched out into space. Various people and events are all related to one another.

About the scripture

Q: What is the Primordial altar?
A: Originally, the altar was a place where Buddhist commandments were given to a parishioner to formally become a priest. The “Hommon no Kaidan", or the Primordial altar, in the case of HBS, is a place where the Scripture is enshrined and religious services are held by chanting the Odaimoku in front of it.

Q: Can you describe what Ryojusen is like?

A: Ryojusen (Mt. Eagle Peak) is a mountain in Magadha, (Rajgir) India, where the Buddha spent eight years in his late life interpreting the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren Shonin referred to Mount Ryjusen as the "Pure Buddha Land". To us, Mount Ryojusen is a place where the Odaimoku can be chanted in front of the Scripture whether it be at the temple or at home.

Q: What is the difference between the Scripture of HBS and other Nichiren Shu Sects?. It seems there is no difference. Why must the Scripture of Nichiren Shu Sect be exchanged for HBS's Scripture when one terminates his relationship with the former and joins HBS?

A: A parishioner of HBS must enshrine the Scripture of HBS. There are three reasons for it. First, Scriptures of Nichiren Shu Sects are not enshrined in a legitimate formality. Some Nichiren Shu Sects place icons of gods or statues of Buddha in front of the Odaimoku Mandala, which are incorrect. Secondly, in many cases the mandala of other sects have not undergone the "Opening the Spiritual Eyes" ceremony or Kaigen. A Scripture which has not undergone "Kaigen" is merely an ordinary scroll. Thirdly, the Scripture must be enshrined in accordance with the fundamental true teachings based on the teachings of Chapters 15 to 22 of the Lotus Sustra. Scriptures that are not based on those conditions are not Scriptures designated by Nichiren Shonin.

Q: Why are there differences in styles of Scriptures?

A: Today. there are over 130 known Scriptures which were written by Nichiren Shonin. Actually, there may be more. These Scriptures are not identical in writing styles. There are some Scriptures written with the names of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and the Guardian Kings of Heaven to the right and left of the Odaimoku in the center. Others are just plain Scriptures with the Odaimoku in the center. Styles of Scriptures are not inportant. The core of the scriptures is the Odaimoku which embraces all things.

Q: What is Shoten Zenjin?

A: Shoten Zenjins are the various guardian kings of heaven who appear in the Lotus Sutra. They are the kings who vowed to protect the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra.

Q: Why does the Odaimoku have the power to cure illnesses?

A: It is because the Odaimoku contains the merits of enlightenment of Buddha and the power of Buddha's spirit to protect practitioners. It is elucidated in Chapter 21, The Supernatural Power of the Tathagata, of the Lotus Sutra: "The supernatural power of the Buddhas are immeasurable, limitless, and inconcievable as previously stated. But I will not be able to tell all the merits of this sutra to whom this sutra is to be transmitted, even though I continue to tell them by supernatural powers for many hundreds of thousands of billions of asamkhyas of kalpa". It is difficult to explain in words. It can only be understood by actual experiences.

Q: Why does Soka Gakkai Sect refer to Nichiren Shonin as Nichiren Dai Shonin?

A: Soka Gakkai considers Nichiren Shonin as the Eternal Buddha. The honorific for the Eternal Buddha is Dai Shonin. Nichiren Shonin is revered by HBS as the Great Master, who had transmitted and spread the Odaimoku in the Mappo Period. Therefore, HBS does not utilize the honorific of "Dai Shonin". HBS refers to him as Boddhisattava or Daiji, which means Great Master. Therefore, I believe the honorific of Great Master may be more appropriate in English.

Practitioner: I believe so. Saint is an honorific associated with priests of Christianity.

What Is Transmigration Between The Six Realms

Q: What is Rokudo-rinne? (Transmigration between the six realms). Is there such a thing as an animal being reborn as a human being or vice versa?

A: Our world is fixed in ten boundaries (realms). The highest is the world of Buddha. followed by the realms of Boddhisattava, Engaku (a self-enlightened Buddha), Shomon (Disciples of Buddha), Tenjo (the heavenly realms), Ningen (humans), Shura (Demi—Gods), Chikusho (animals), Gaki (hungry spirits), and Jigoku (hell). Ordinarily, we are reborn somewhere within the six realms from Hell to the heavenly realm in cycles. Following is a true story: A man with a tattoo on his arm died. His family was a farmer who raised cows. A year after the death of the man, a cow gave birth to a calf. This calf had on its back the same tattoo pattern which was on the dead man's arm. I believe you can ascertain what that meant. There is also a reverse case. Dogs and cats can be reborn as human beings through the supporting power of the Odaimoku they heard during their stay with a parishioner.

Q: Isn't the thought of transmigration between the six realms of Buddhism and the Theory of Evolution (Darwin's theory) contradictory?

A: The Theory of Evolution explains the process of living things on this planet. Transmigration between the six realms, explained by Buddhism, stems from a broader viewpoint beyond the space and evolution of time of living things.

Q: How does Buddhism view time? Does time have a beginning and an end?

A: In Nichiren Shonin's "Kanjin Honzon Sho" it states: "Buddha neither deceased in the past or will be born in the future". The life span of Buddha is beginningless and endless.

Q: Is it a flow of one straight line, or is it endless as in cycles?

A: It is spiral.

Heaven and The land of tranquil light

Q: What is the difference between Heaven in Christianity and the "Pure Buddha Land" or the "Land of Tranquil Light" in Buddhism?

A: I do not know how heaven is explained by Christianity. Buddhism explains heaven to be the "Land of Tranquil Light" or as the "Pure Buddha Land", but there are some differences among other sects. The "Land of Tranquil Light" or the "Pure Buddha Land" are referred as the spiritually best world for the souls of people who had attained enlightenment of Buddhahood. The "Land of Tranquil Light" is not only the world where one proceeds to after death but also HBS looks upon it as a land we visit during the chanting of the Odaimoku in front of the Scripture (Gohonzon) whether it be at home or at the temple.

The Eternal Buddha

Q: Nichiren Shonin proclaimed: "Itai Doshin" (United in mind although separated in body) is an important element. If so, why are there so many different sects in Buddhism? Why aren't they consolidated into one sect?

A: It is a regrettable situation, but HBS cannot be united with sects that display icons of various Buddhas and Guardian Kings of Heaven and which do not preach the true principles of Nichiren Shonin.

Q: What is the biggest difference between HBS and Soka Gakkai (SGI)?
A: Soka Gakkai revers Nichiren Shonin as the Eternal Buddha. HBS does not proclaim Nichiren Shonin as the Eternal Buddha. It was Jyogo Boddhisattava, the first disciple of the Eternal Buddha, who appeared in this world of the Mappo Period in the form of Nichiren Shonin and who acted as a messenger of the Eternal Buddha. Thus, HBS revers Nichiren Shonin as the Great Master, Teacher and Parent.

Q: What is the relationship between the Eternal Buddha and the Odaimoku?
A: The Eternal Buddha, who attained enlightenment, and the Odaimoku, the true Dharma, are identical.

Q: The true Dharma is fundamentally an eternal existence with no beginning and no end, isn't it?
A: That is correct.

Q: The Dharma has no beginning, but a Buddha to be called a Buddha must engage in religious acitivities to attain enlightenment isn't that so? If so, isn't there a beginning for such practices? Isn't there an inconsistency that they be referred to as identical?
A: The Odaimoku Scripture is not a mere law of the universe. It is a special characteristic embodied in the Eternal Buddha — a Cause and Effect rule. The engagement in religious activities by the Eternal Buddha is Cause. The attainment of enlightenment to become a Buddha is an Effect. The Cause and Effect rule is similar to that of a chain linkage. Therefore, in Cause there is a beginning, but the Effect possessed by the Eternal Buddha is an infinite cycle. For example. flowers bloom — an Effect. The flower is the result of a seed — a Cause. But, was the seed the starting point? The seed was obtained from the flower. There is a Cause (a "In") before the Effect (a "Ka") and vice versa. The Cause and Effect Law is a repeating cycle. The Eternal Buddha is referred to as eternal in that sense. He had continuously engaged in the escetic religious practices and constantly trained and guided the people. Within those deeds we find eternity in the Eternal Buddha.

Q: What is the figure of the Eternal Buddha like?
A: We tend to imagine the figure of the Eternal Buddha by its icons, but those statues are a provisional figure of him when he appeared in this world. Since the Eternal Buddha embraces all existences, his true figure cannot be captured in visual concept. A two—fascicle work by Nikko Shonin who was one of the 6 main diciples of Nichiren Shonin containing Nichiren Shonin's lecture on the Lotus Sutra given at Mount Minobu in 1278 (The Ongi Kuden) stated:"The figure of the Eternal Buddha does not look like the statues which portray him as he appeared in this world."

Differences between Buddhism and Christianity

Q: What is the difference between Buddhism (Buddha) and Christianity (God)?
A: The God of Christianity is considered a creator. On the other hand, the Buddha of Buddhism is not a creator like that of Christianity. To describe it simply, Buddha was a human being who possessed the fundamental truth of the universe in a man's soul. Christianity's God is not a human being. Christianity states that human beings can not become God. On the other hand, Buddha is an extension of a perfected human being who is above us. The Buddha (Shakyamuni Buddha), who preached his teachings for a period of 50 years, appeared in India approximately 2600 years ago. While preaching the Lotus Sutra during his late years, Shakyamuni Buddha revealed that "his original state" was the Primordial Eternal Buddha that possessed an eternal life. The Buddha elucidated in the Lotus Sutra that he wraps the entire universe, space wise and time wise, and he was the Buddha that

existed from the beginning of the universe.

Q: It seems like it is related to the concept of Christianity's God, isn't it?
A: Christianity's God is a creator who exists somewhere. In other words, the God of Christianity is a relative existence. In contrast, the Eternal Buddha, who was a human being, wraps all existences and can be considered as an absolute existence. Therefore, man is a part of the Eternal Buddha.

HBS's subject of worship

Q: Is HBS's subject of worship the "Eternal Buddha"?
A: It is better to describe it as the "World of Enlightenment" of the Eternal Buddha. He has no form or shape. He embraces the universe through the Fine Dharma that penetrates the world. There is no need to sculpture icons of the Eternal Buddha and revere it. Based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, Nichiren Shonin described the world of Buddha's enlightenment in words, and HBS's subject of worship is the Gohonzon, Namumyohorengekyo.
Q: What is written on the Gohonzon?
A: The Chinese characters (Kanji), "Namumyohorengekyo" are inscribed in the center, with Shakyamuni Buddha to the right of it and Taho Buddha on the left, respectively. Also, the names of Bodhisattvas, whose duties were to spread the Lotus Sutra, and various Guardian Kings of Heaven that protects the practitioners are written on it.

Meaning of the Odaimoku

Q: What is the meaning of Namumyohorengekyo?
A: Namu is "To be a devotee from the soul". Myoho is the Fine Dharma. Renge is the Lotus Flower and Kyo is the Sutra. The Chinese characters translated from the Indian words itself have no meaning. Namumyohorengekyo is the title of the Lotus Sutra. Thus, it simply means, one will believe in the "World of Enlightenment of the Lotus Sutra". Originally, Namumyohorengekyo meant, "The words describing the Sacred Enlightenment of the Buddha" and, essentially, should not be analyzed. Namumyohorengekyo is also referred to as the Odaimoku, a World of Enlightenment of the Buddha.

Q: Why is "Namumyohorengekyo" chanted?
A: Buddhism engages in various practices to attain the merits of Buddha's enlightenment into one's soul through the use of body, soul, and mouth. They are known as the three forms of practices. Practitioners of superior ability will use practices of their own methods to arouse their souls to get closer to the stage of enlightenment. But, the common people can not accomplish the objective using their methods of practice. Thus, the teachings of the Lotus Sutra's Essential Sections elucidated that the people in the World of Mappo should use the mouth to repeatedly chant the Odaimoku, Namumyohorengekyo. The sounds and chanting voices of "Namumyohorengekyo" heard through our ears will be etched in our soul. The Odaimoku contains the power of merits of the Buddha. By planting it into our souls, the sinful soul of the common people will be filtered and purified.

Q: Why is it necessary to chant the Odaimoku repeatedly?
A: If you have an ambition to become a soccer player, it is natural to engage oneself in learning to kick the ball. One can only accomplish the skill through repeated practices. Similarly, by chanting the Odaimoku repeatedly the merits will compound and be afforded accordingly into the soul.

Q: How many times should the Odaimoku be chanted?
A: The more the better. But, it should be no less than a thousand times a day. Or, no less than 30 minutes when praying before the altar. If one does not have sufficient time, it is alright to divide the chanting session between morning and night for 15 minutes each time.

The difference between Mahayana Buddhism and Hinayana Buddhism:

Q: There is the Large and Small Vehicle teachings. What are the differences?
A: Large Vehicle is a large conveyance. A large number of people can simultaneously get onto it. For example, the Large Vehicle Religion is a boat that can carry a large number of passengers, whereas the Small Vehicle Religion can carry only a single person or a few persons. The Large Vehicle Religion teaches large numbers of practitioners to mutually help one another, to encourage others to its faith and to devote themselves for the objective of attaining the world of enlightenment. The Small Vehicle Religion teachings emphasize independent to seek enlightenment. The Lotus Sutra that we revere is the highest peak among of Mahayana Buddhism.

The realms after death

Q: What are the Realms of Buddha and Bodhisattvas like?
A: Those realms are not a place. It is a situation of the soul. It cannot be imagined by human.

Q: What happens to a good person who helped others, but who did not practice the faith of HBS?
A: A person who built good karmas during their life—time will, undoubtedly, be reborn in a fortunate circumstance.
Q: Can such people proceed to the Realm of Buddha?
A: No. Not unless they had sowed seeds of Buddhahood into their Arayashiki, the most fundamental eight level of consciousness, through practices of the true religion of HBS. Nichiren Shonin stated: "The common people of the Mappo Era can only plant seeds of Buddhahood into their Arayashiki by chanting the Odaimoku".

Q: My parents are not parishioners of HBS. Can their souls be redeemed after death?
A: Yes. Of course. The spirit of anyone can be redeemed by chanting the Odaimoku. But it should not be misconstrued with "Jobutsu", entering into Nirvana. "Jobutsu", an Effect, can only be attained by someone who had engaged in the practices of the Odaimoku religion and had accumulated merits during their life—time, a Cause. A non—parishioner, after death, can be reborn into the realm of human being through the Odaimoku "Goeko" (transferrence of merit) service. The destiny tied to the Odaimoku will permit the deceased to engage in the true religion after rebirth.

Chanting the Odaimoku and reciting the Lotus Sutra:

Q: Possession of a true religion is Odaimoku chanting, isn't it? Can merits for enlightenment be received through recitation of the Lotus Sutra? Didn't Nichiren Shonin recite the Lotus Sutra?
A: There are two ways to recite the Lotus Sutra. One method is to recite the Lotus Sutra with the feeling that it is more edifying than chanting the Odaimoku, but this is a wrong method. The other is to recite the Sutra with feeling of reverence and gratefulness for the Odaimoku. This is the right way. Thus, HBS recites Chapter 21, "The Supernatural Powers of the Tathagta" of the Lotus Sutra. In any event,

to attain enlightenment is to chant the Odaimoku and acquire its merits. Nichiren Shonin recited the Lotus Sutra, but, in his case, he thoroughly and accurately understood the meaning of the Lotus Sutra. It is entirely different from the way we would recite it without full knowledge of what we are reciting.

Q: Is it meaningless to chant the Odaimoku without having faith in it?
A: Not necessarily so. It is clearly better to chant the Odaimoku than not to. It is only normal that a person who chants the Odaimoku with gratitude within their soul will recieve more religious merits than those who do not.

Introspection Into One's Mind

Q: What is the meaning of "Kanjin" described in the "Treatise on the Object of Worship" (Kanjin Honzon Sho)?
A: It means observation of one's soul. That is, polishing and purifying one's soul through the practices of Buddhism. There are two methods. One is to bank on your own ability, like that of Zen Buddhism. The other method is to seek outside aid. Most HBS members require outside assistance to observe their soul. It was Nichiren Shonin who showed us the way to do it in the "Treatise on the Object of Worship" by chanting the Odaimoku. Let us chant the Odaimoku out loud and to listen to it by ear. By doing so, the Odaimoku will plant Buddha seeds into our soul. The Odaimoku is the seed which contains the merits of Buddha's enlightenment. The seeds of the Odaimoku and the power of faith will be united and it will polish and purify our soul.

Nichiren Shonin's successor

Q: According to Nichiren Shoshu Sect and Soka Gakkai, the only person who can succeed Nichiren Shonin is Nichiko Shonin. Is that a correct viewpoint?
A: No. Just prior to his death, Nichiren Shonin nominated the following six disciples among many others to become leaders. They were: Nissho Shonin, Nichiro Shonin, Nichiko Shonin, Nichiji Shonin, Niko Shonin, and Nitcho Shonin. Nichiren Shoshu Sect and Soka Gakkai's selection of Nichiko Shonin stems from the fact that he was their founder and for public appeal. Nichiren Shonin divided his keepsakes among his disciples. Nisso Shonin was given a personal Lotus Sutra Scroll. Nichiro Shonin received a hand—written Scripture Scroll of Nichiren Shonin which was displayed in his altar. On the other hand, Nichiko Shonin was granted a horse that Nichiren Shonin kept. It is extremely doubtful that a person who was given a horse can be considered to be Nichiren Shonin's successor. I doubt it.

Invocation of the Buddha and Saints

Q: The "Myoko Ichiza" cites the names of Boddhisattva Nichizo and other priests, such as Daikaku Daisojo. Do they belong to the family of HBS? Please explain briefly about them.
A: Boddhisattva Nichizo or Nichizo Shonin was one of six main disciples of Nichiren Shonin. He was the most faithful disciple who served Nichiren Shonin. Nichizo Shonin was only 14 years of age when Nichiren Shonin died. Prior to his death, Nichiren Shonin had instructed Nichizo Shonin to go to Kyoto (then the capital city) to study and to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra for the future. Nichizo Shonin became a disciple of Nichiro Shonin at age 16, and he spent the rest of his life

spreading the teachings of the Lotus Sutra in Kyoto in compliance with Nichiren Shonin's will. He died at the age of 74. HBS has taken over Nichizo Shonin and Nichizo Shonin's tradition. Priest Daikaku was a priest of Daikakuji Temple, a Shingon Shu Sect, in Kyoto, until he was converted to Nichiren Buddhism by Nichizo Shonin's "Kyoke" (converting others to the true teachings of HBS through education and guidance). Priest Daikaku then spread the teachings of HBS in the Kyoto area; followed by Rogen Shonin, Nissai Shonin, Nichizon Shonin and Nichido Shonin. Nichiryu Shonin's uncles are Nichizon Shonin and Nichido Shonin.

Accomplishments of Nichiryu Shonin

Q: It is stated in the "Myoko lchiza" that Nichiryu Shonin was the revivor of Nichiren Shonin's teachings. What did he actually do?

A: 150 years after since the death of Nichiren Shonin, Nichiryu Shonin played an active role in reviving the teachings of Nichiren Shonin. At that time, Nichiren Shonin's teachings were greatly misinterpreted because his religion was not officially recognized and sanctioned as a true religious sect by the Government. Consequently, the priests were compelled to place themselves in the officially Government sanctioned Tendai Shu Sect. Placed in this predicament, the priests, naturally, were exposed to the misinterpreted teachings that the "Shakumon" (Provisional Sections) and "Hommon" (The Essential Sections) were equal in nature-"Honjaku Itchi" (the same). Since there were no printed materials available of Nichiren Shonin's writings (due to lack of printing techniques during that period), nor access to his hand written manuscripts, the priest had no way to learn of the differences in teachings.

Nichiryu Shonin, therefore, visited many temples throughout the nation where Nichiren Shonin's manuscripts were kept and preserved, and he transcribed them. Upon examining and researching Nichiren Shonin's manuscripts, Nichiryu Shonin concluded that his teachings were fundamentally based on the teachings of "Hommon" of the Lotus Sutra, and the chanting of the Odaimoku is its basic principle. Due to Nichiryu Shonin's revival of Nichiren Shonin's true teachings, the former is regarded an an invaluable person of HBS.

Q: What portion of the Lotus Sutra was being taught to the people of the Mappo Era?

A: Various Bodhisattvas, led by Jogyo Bosatsu, came welling up from the opening in the earth to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra for the Mappo Era. These Bodhisattvas were exposed only to the portions of Chapter 15 through Chapter 22 of the Lotus Sutra, and not in its entirety. This means the only important eight chapters of "Honmon Happon" were taught. Nichiren Shonin stated in the "Kanjin Honzon Sho" (A Treatise on the Object of Worship) that "Such a sublime Sacred Object (Myohorengekyo) had never been revealed by the Buddha Shakyamuni during the more than forty years of his life as a preacher before the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, and even during the eight years when he taught the Lotus Sutra it was only in the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra that this was revealed".

Displaying of Nichiren Shonin's statue

Q: Why is the statue of Nichiren Shonin displayed in front of the Gohonzon by HBS?

A: Nichiren Shonin appeared in the Mappo Period to spread the wonderful Dharma that was entrusted to Jogyo , a direct disciple of the Eternal Buddha. Neediess to say, the founder of Buddhism was Shakyamuni Buddha. Therefore, he should be the one to be most revered, but, as previously explained, Shakyamuni Buddha's original form was the Primordial Eternal Buddha and since his

spirit dwell in the Gohonzon, HBS does not display a statue of him. Nichiren Shonin's teachings were based on the principle of the primordial eight chapters of the Lotus Sutra. He stated that he was the rebirth of Jogyo because the various experiences of persecutions and life threatening episodes that he encountered while spreading the true teachings, activities and achievements coincided with the incidents predicted in the Lotus Sutra. There is no other person besides Nichiren Shonin who carried out the teachings of Shakyamuni Buddha faithfully. Thus, Nichiren Shonin's statue is displayed in front of the Gohonzon because he is respected and revered as the greatest teacher and master. People that practice the faith of the Lotus Sutra in this period should be grateful to be near him by chanting the Odaimoku with a soul of reverence and to be able to serve him by doing other duties.

Mortuary Tablets

Q: What are the Mortuary Tablets enshrined to the right and left of Nichiren Shonin's statue? And, why are they enshrined?

A: Nichiryu Shonin's mortuary tablet is on the right side of Nichiren Shonin's statue and Nissen Shonin's tablet (the founder af HBS) is on the left side. (They are both sacred tablets). Less than 100 years after Nichiren Shonin's death, his noble teachings were misinterpreted and the form of faith and practices changed, Nichiryu Shonin took an active part in reinstating Nichiren Shonin's original teachings and guided the Nichiren Sect to the true way of its practices and teachings 150 years after Nichiren Shonin's death. Later, Nissen Shonin, based on the teachings of Nichiren Shonin and Nichiryu Shonin, founded HBS. To express our reverence to the two Shonins their mortuary tablets are enshrined besides Nichiren Shonin's statue and in front of the Gohonzon.

Why is the statue of Nichiren Shonin black?

Q: 1. Why is the statue of Nichiren Shonin displayed in front of the Odaimoku Gohonzon?
2. Why is the statue of Nichiren Shonin of HBS black?
3. What is Nichiren Shonin holding in his hands?
4. Why is a cotton strip (Owata) placed on Nichiren Shonin's head?
5. What should one do when enshrining the statue of Nichiren Shonin into the altar?

A: Nichiren Shonin, who taught us about the true Dharma and transmitted to us the Odaimoku entrusted to Jogyo Bodhisattva, is, in a sense, our Great Master, Teacher and Parent. His statue is placed before the Scripture in the altar to offer our respect and to revere him faithfully. Other Nichiren sects display Nichiren Shonin's icons, but they are not black. The black statue of HBS is origin of HBS. The expression "black" is inappropriate. It is better to refer to it as an antique—looking statue due to the lapse of so many years. HBS's statue of Nichiren Shonin that is antique—looking is justified for the following reasons: There was a disciple of Nichiren Shonin whose name was Nippo Shonin. He excelled in woodcarving and had carved about 3 or 4 figures of Nichiren Shonin. One of them is displayed at the Honmonji Temple in Kyoto, now known as the Yuseiji Temple, the Main Temple of HBS. This statue had a natural wooden color initially, but being exposed to burning candle oil and for so many years, it began to get darker in color. This is also the statue on which Nichiren Shonin conducted an "Opening of the Eyes" ceremony to instill the spirit of the Odaimoku. In the early part of the Meiji Era, when Nissen Shonin entered Yuseiji Temple to carry on his religious practices, the statue was already a black looking antique. Since then, Nissen Shonin felt that all new HBS's statue of Nichiren Shonin should look like the original statue displayed at Yuseiji Temple. That statue of Nichiren Shonin has been designated as a national treasure by the Japanese Education, Science and

Technology for its value and excellent carving technique.

Nichiren Shonin is holding a scepter in his right hand, and a Lotus Sutra scroll in his left hand. Many parishioners think that he is holding wooden clappers in his hands. Not so. His right hand is holding a scepter and in his left hand is the Fifth Scroll, of the Eight Scrolls of the Lotus Sutra. His icon illustrates that he is presenting a sermon to us. The Fifth Scroll contains Chapter 13, "Fortitude", of the Lotus Sutra. As you know, the modern day Lotus Sutra is in book form, but, in ancient times, it was written on eight separate scrolls. The Fifth Scroll elucidates that people born in the Mappo Period must be courageous enough to overcome any hardships they encounter and to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Nichiren Shonin carried this scroll with him at all times because he felt that it contained the Eternal Buddha's prediction that he would appear in this world of Mappo as a messenger of the Eternal Buddha.

Purpose of the cotton strips

Every year, from November to March of the following year, cotton strips are placed on the head of Nichiren Shonin's figure.

On November 11, 1264, Nichiren Shonin, accompanied by several disciples on their way to the home of a parishioner, Yoshitaka Kudo, was attacked by a large number of mobsters of Kagenobu Tojo, a district head. During this scuffle, Nichiren Shonin received a cut with a sword on his forehead. That incident is known as the Tojo Komatsubara Incident, one of four famous attacks on Nichiren Shonin. After the scuffle ended, an old woman who just happened to pass by, seeing the cut on Nichiren Shonin's forehead offered him her cotton hood. This is the origin of placing a cotton strip on the head of Nichiren Shonin's statue. It also serves to express our feeling of esteem by protecting it ostensibly from pain during the cold winter.

Meaning of offering mortuary tablets:

Q: What do the wood and paper mortuary tablets represent?

A: Those mortuary tablets are offered to transmit the merits of good deeds to the spirit of our ancestors. An inscriptioin of the Odaimoku is inscribed on the upper part of the mortuary tablets and below it is written the posthumous Buddhist name and family name. Naturally, transference of merits to the deceased cannot be accomplished by just offering tablets. Chanting the Odaimoku is most important. By doing so, the merits of enlightenment contained within the Odaimoku can be transmitted to the spirit of the deceased through the Gohonzon.

The Lotus Sutra, a savior for evil persons

Q: Why is Devadatta, who rebelled against the Buddha, included in the Gohonzon?

A: Devadatta was once a disciple of the Buddha, but he later turned against the Buddha because of self-conceit. He used every means to injure the Buddha and his grave offenses condemned him to hell. Why must such an evil person's name be included in the Gohonzon? Christianity elucidats that a sinner that falls into hell will forever remain in hell. Buddhism, on the other hand, elucidated that even those who fall into the realm of hell, hungry spirits, and animals, will be given the chance to redeem themselves from those realms and be saved. Devadatta fell into hell because of his amassed sins. But, through repentance for his past sins he was once again able to return to the realm of human beings.

Thereafter, he devoted himself to Buddhism and enhanced his boundary to protect practitioners of the Lotus Sutra. The name of Kishimo-jin (Hariti) is inscribed on the Gohonzon composed by Nichiren Shonin. She committed evil sins by kidnapping children and kiling them, but after being admonished by Shakyamuni Buddha, she repented for her sins and became a believer in Buddhism. The Lotus Sutra elucidats that anyone that falls into the realm below the realm of human beings, can be rescued through merit transference services.

Have other Buddhas besides Shakyamuni Buddha attained enlightenment?

Q: Are there any other Buddhas that attained enlightenment besides Shakyanmuni Buddha?
A: Buddha means saints that have been awakened to the truth. Human beings have no universal restrictions of time and space. Shakyamuni Buddha stated: "I am not the only one that was enlightened to the true Dharma contained within the universe and men's soul. There may have been others that were enlightened to the truth and became Buddhas. There may be others in the future. There is no mistake that there were others that were awakened to the truth". Various other Buddhas appeared in the Mahayana doctrine beside Shakyamuni Buddha. As such, numerous Buddhas came about in the past, present, and many Buddhas may appear throughout the ten worlds in the future. There is only one original law. This "Original Law", is elucidated in the Lotus Sutra. It is not merely a law of nature (universe), but is the very eternal life of the Primordial Eternal Buddha. Based on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and the world of the Eternal Buddha, the "Namumyohorengekyo" script is the Gohonzon.

Q: Then, what is the connection between the Eternal Buddha and Shakyamuni Buddha?
A: Shakyamuni Buddha, like other Buddhas, is the transformation of the Eternal Buddha. In short, they are the other self of the Eternal Buddha. They appeared in the form of a human being in this world to guide and save the people from suffering.

Q: Shakyamuni Buddha was originally a person to be awakened to the truth, wasn't he? Why did he became a priest, to practice and be awakened to the truth?
A: He wanted to be a model for the people's way of life, religion and practices.

Are human beings originally an existence for enlightenment?

What is Buddha?
Q: All existences in the world are the manifestation of the life of the Buddha. Please explain why human beings are believed to be an existence for enlightenment?
A: First of all, I would like to explain what Buddha is. Buddha is a saint that desires to awaken the people to pursue the fundamental truth contained in the universe and in the soul of mankind through practices. Historically, Shakyamuni Buddha, who appeared in India approximately 2,600 years ago, is referred to as Buddha. Not the only saints that were awakened to the fundamental truth (ultimate Dharma) are called Buddha. According to Buddhism, the universe (the whole universal system) itself is Buddha. If Shakyamuni Buddha was able to become a Buddha by being spiritually awakened (to the Dharma) shouldn't the original Dharma be Buddha? The universe filled with original spiritual truth is Buddha. In other words, a human being that is awakened to the Dharma is Buddha and the universal system is also Buddha. To advance this thinking all existences in the universe, such as mountains, oceans, trees and grasses, and human beings can be thought as the phycial appearances of Buddha's life.

Buddha of phenomena and noumena

A mistaken thinking, such as “Innate Buddha Ideology" became prevalent within the Tendai Sect in the Heian Era. The mistaken “innate Buddha Ideologsy", believes that we, human beings are the manifestation of Buddha life. Therefore, it is the original spiritually enlightened existences. If that were true, this thinking was, “why it is necessary to devote oneself in practices for the attainment of enlightenment?.

Nichiren Shonin and Nichiryu Shonin, who returned the mistaken teachings to the true teaching, criticized the “Innate Buddha Ideology". They felt that it created confusion. Buddha phenomena are natural elements contained in things and are possessed by human beings.

Noumena is the condition of polishing the natural elements.

Truly, the universe is called the Dharma body and is Buddha itself. If human beings are partly the existence of Dharma Buddha, it cannot be said that they are originally enlightened existence. That is merely a Buddha of Phenomena.

Figuratively speaking, babies at birth possess many possibilities. They possess the ability to learn language and gain knowledge. However, if they are not taught or given the opportunity to expand their abilities while growing up, they will not be able to nurture their talents.

Human beings are a part of Buddha's Dharma body. The soul is endowed with natural elements known as Buddha nature. By being given an opportunity to practice their talents, the buds of Buddha nature will sprout and livelihood will be revitalized.

From that standpoint, Nichiren Shonin and Nichiryu Shonin criticized the mistaken views of the “Innate Buddha Ideology" and they elucidated upon the importance of engaging in the practices of the Lotus Sutra teachings.

The HBS's system of “Oko" was established about 150 years ago by Nissen Shonin for the purpose of altering the “reason" of Buddha nature to The “practice" of Buddha nature based on the teachings of Nichiren Shonin and Nichiryu Shonin.

The two most important factors of “Oko" are the chanting of the Odaimoku and listening to sermons. Through Oko, we become an “existence to be awakened".

Benefits (Goriyaku)

Q: Westerners' believe benefits to be materialistic. What are HBS's types of benefits?

A: Naturally, favorable job situations, business and economic improvements are materialistic benefits. Physical benefits include recovery from illness, building a healthy energetic body, avoiding accidents and calamities, and improvement in human relationships. Dissolving affliction of the soul and various other things are psychological benefits. The most important factor of HBS's benefit is fostering openness to accept changes. That is, to polish the Odaimoku by repeated chanting. Elevating one's openness to the HBS faith is also a benefit.

Q: We have been told to avoid attaching photographs, calendars, or pictures on the same wall where the Gohonzon is displayed. Aren't HBS's regulations too extreme?

A: It is important to face and have the soul concentrate on the Gohonzon while praying and chanting the Odaimoku. It is necessary to avoid distractions of other objects. Displaying pictures of beautiful women or tourist attractions to the left and right of the Gohonzon will distract one's mind during the chanting of the Odaimoku.

Q: Can one be excused from chanting the Odaimoku in front of the altar if they are tired and want to relax

or sleep?

A: Nichiren Shonin stated:"chanting the Odaimoku even for a short period of time after a busy day will result in greater merits than chanting the Odaimoku a hundred times in a favorable environment. It is better to chant the Odaimoku even for five minutes while battling the conditions of fatigue and sleepiness.

Q: The Lotus Sutra expounded that the spirit of Buddha exists within the infinite space. Why can not one just face the infinite space and pray?

A: For example, numerous electrical waves are emited into space by TV stations. However, one cannot enjoy the broadcasted pictures and sounds at home unless there is an antenna or a receiver. Similarly, Buddha's mercy will not reach us unless we face the Gohonzon and pray. The emitted electrical wave is the benefit and the TV set is the Gohonzon where the true spirits of the Buddha and Bodhisattvas dwell. No matter how pure a Gohonzon may be, if there are materials that divert one's concentration away from the Gohonzon while praying, the chanting will become lackadaisical and your desires will not reach the Buddha. As such, an interaction between oneself and the Buddha will not prevail and beneflts will not be awarded.

Is it true that spirits dwell in tress and paper?

Q: It is said that spirits of Buddha and Bodhisattvas dwell in the Gohonzon made from paper and wood, but that concept is difficult to believe. How should we understand that?

A: There is a story in England where a young man began drinking after marriage and spent his day dilly-dallying. The wife who became doubtful of her husband's conditions invited a female Psychic acquaintance for consultation. The Psychic initially looked around the house. She then pointed to a chair that the husband sat on and said; "get rid of that chair immediately. It is the root of all evil".
The chair was purchased from an antique shop as a wedding gift from her husband's friend. An investigation of its former owner revealed that he was an alcoholic and had committed suicide while sitting on the chair. In short, the traits of the former owner were transferred to the young man. If the chair had not been disposed of at that time the husband may have also committed suicide with a pistol while sitting on the chair. Another example involves an American couple who bought an accessory made from an elephant tusk while visiting Kobe, Japan. As the husband held the tusk in his hand, he felt a severe pain in his tooth. Likewise, the wife's tooth began to ache when she held the accessory. After returning home, a friend that accepted the elephant tusk accessory also felt pain in a tooth. In this case, the scholar, Colline Wilson, stated: "Perhaps, the elephant was shot by the poachers and the tusk was removed while it was still alive. The agony it suffered must have shifted to the tusk and it can be thought that a person that retains the accessory will be subjected to a tooth ache." The feelings and spirits of Buddha and Bodhisattvas dwell in the Gohonzon. This is based on the theory and method of the "Three thousand realms in a thought (Ichinen Sanzen) elucidated in the Lotus Sutra. We must rely on the method established by Nichiren Shonin in his writing, "Opening the (Spiritual) Eyes" (Kaigen).

What are the differences between HBS's Gohonzon and Soka Gakkai's Gohonzon?

Q: When I attended a Soka Gakkai's meeting, I felt no emotion when facing their Gohonzon. However, by facing the HBS's Gohonzon and chanting the Odaimoku today, I received an unfamiliar emotional gratitude. Why are there such differences between the Gohonzon of Soka Gakkai and HBS even

though they are identical?

A: There are two reasons. 1). Whether the Gohonzon is based on the true teachings or not. 2). whether an "Opening of the (Spiritual) Eyes (Kaigen") ceremony had been performed or not. A Gohonzon based upon a false doctrine is not a true Gohonzon. Soka Gakkai's stands on the theory that Nichiren Shonin is the Eternal Buddha, but they revere Honorary Chairman, Ikeda Daisaku, as their superhuman leader. Their teachings digress from the true form of Nichiren Shonin's religion. Moreover, Soka Gakkai's Gohonzon has not undergone an "Opening of the (Spiritual) Eyes (Kaigen)" ritual. Kaigen is a ritual to invite the spirits of Buddha and Bodisattvas and other Buddha protectors of the Lotus Sutra into the Gohonzon. The Soka Gakkai's Gohonzon, which has not been blessed by an "Opening of the Eyes" ritual, is only a hanging scroll. Therefore, you feel no emotions.
On the other hand, the Gohonzon of HBS, based on the true teachings of the Lotus Sutra and Nichiren Shohint has properly undergone the "Opening of the Eyes" ceremony. Therefore, the Buddha, Bodhisattvas and other Buddhas that protect the Lotus Sutra dwell in the Gohonzon. Therefore, you feel emotions of gratitude.

To be protected by The Gohonzon:

Q: What is the most important thing one must do to be protected by the Gohonzon?

A: The spirits of the Buddha and Bodhisattva dwell in the Gohonzon. It is important to possess a feeling of reverence to the souls of the Buddha and Bodhisattva through the Odaimoku to be protected by the Gohonzon. The Buddha and Bodhisattvas' desires are for the salvation and guidance of all mankind. If we do not possess such desires in our soul it will not induce the souls of Buddha and Bodhisattvas. Thus, one should not only seek protection from them, but one should strive to convert others to the HBS religion for their happiness through the assistance of the Gohonzon by chanting the Odaimoku. That is the shortest way to gain protection from the Gohonzon.

Q: Is it alright to pray, by name, to a specific Bodhisattvas or Guardian Kings of Heaven mentioned in the Lotus Sutra?

A: The Bodhisattvas and Guardian Kings of Heaven, who appear in the Lotus Sutra, vowed to "protect the practitioners of the Lotus Sutra" in front of Shakyamuni Buddha. The true practitioners of the Lotus Sutra in the Mappo Period are the people that engage in chanting the Odaimoku, Namumyohorengeko, which Nichiren Shonin had spread as a messenger on behalf of the Buddha. Therefore, it is more important to chant the Odaimoku rather than reciting the names of Bodhisattvas and Guardian Kings of Heaven.

Q: Does Shakyamuni Buddha save evil persons who do not believe in him?

A: Would you extend a rope to a victim who fell into a ravine and say from above the cliff, "Hang on to the rope. I will pull you up." The victim however shouts, "I don't trust you" and refuses to grasp the rope. Of course, the victim cannot be saved.Shakyamuni Buddha's objective is to guide and save all existences. However, if the victim has no desire to be guided and saved, even Shakyamuni Buddha cannot save him.

Transference of merit

Q: How are the spirits ofthe deceased saved?

A: The good/bad behaviors that one has created become "In" (Cause) and the various good/bad things that one encounters are "Ka" (Effect/condition). This is the basic doctrine of Buddhism. Therefore, by

building a good “Cause" through practices the HBS faith, a benefit of “Effect" can be brought about. The good “Cause" that one accumulated through numerous chanting of the Odaimoku can be sent to the spirit of the deceased through the intervention of the Gohonzon. If a deceased person's spirit is in the lower realm and is suffering, transference of one's merit to another will assist the spirit to be reborn once again into the reaIm of human being. But in order for that spirit to attain enlightenment the person engaged in the transference of merit must be a practitioner of the HBS religion. Transference of one's merit to another is returning the spirit of the deceased once again into our world and to provide a chance to come in contact with the religion of the Lotus Sutra.

What is Benefit (Goriyaku) of the soul?

Q: How does chanting of the Odaimoku change the condition of the soul?

A: Chanting the Odaimoku will assist you to enter into a condition of exchange with the Eternal Buddha, the very life of the universe. Through this exchange, the merits of Buddha enlightenment will flow into your soul. Thus, through continuous chanting of the Odaimoku, you will realize that you are being kept alive and a feeling of gratitude and joy will arouse your spirits. The way you treat others and your acceptance of things will change for the better. Nichiren Shonin, who attempted to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra, possessed a sense of joy and gratitude toward the authorities and officials of the feudal Kamakura government (Bakufu) that persecuted him. Nichiren Shonin stated that the persecution inflicted upon him by those persons allowed him to follow the predicted path elucidated in the Lotus Sutra as a practitioner. He elaborated:“When I return to the land of the tranquil light, I will attempt to save the people who persecuted me". By continuing to chant the Odaimoku faithfully, one will naturally be endowed with a soul serenity. Is there a more wonderful benefit as that?

Illness can be cured by faith

Q: There is a parishioner, who was suffering from an internal disorder for a long time. Upon visiting her, she informed me that she had to undergo surgery.
Taking the opportunity, I advised her to ameliorate her religious pose and pray at the temple, and have other parishioners hold a prayer service on her behalf. Her response was, “If illness can be cured through religious service, there is no need for doctors". How can I change her way of thinking?

A: HBS does not expound that, “One should not see a doctor, nor undergo surgery, nor by practicing the faith, illness will be cured". Medicine and religion, basically, are not mutually exclusive. They supplements and cooperates with each other. The temple played a role in curing illness for the people in the past. For example, Prince Shotoku, during the construction of the Shintenoji Temple in Osaka, built the Seyaku Clinic where the poor could receive medication and care in the same compound. This type of institutions proclaimed by the Emperor Komyo was the model for today's institutional system. HBS recommends that when parishioners are not feeling well they should consult a doctor and, if surgery is necessary, to proceed with the prescribed remedy. In conjunction with the medical treatment, one should worship at the temple by chanting the Odaimoku. The sick should gladly accept a prayer service on their behalf by the members of the temple so he/she could receive a divine reward in thier time of need. First, be determined to depend on the faith and offer a prayer to the Gohonzon. An illness that requires a surgery may recover eariyer. Secondly, parishioners who accumulated merits through every day practices will lessen their suffering and pain. Thirdly, parishioners will be guided to a good hospital and doctors. They will be taken care of in the best and safest manner. Fourth, a prayer service by parishioners will simultaneously take place while the surgery is being conducted. This will ensure a satisfactory conclusion. A post-surgery prayer services will also help for a speedy recovery.

Why do belivers encounter accidents?

Q: A converted Believer encountered an automobile accident. He was spared his life but was hospitalized. The car was so severely damaged that it was a write-off. While the parishioner did not express it verbally, he had doubts as to why he had not been spared of the accident.

A: Parishioners' feeling of acceptance about accidents and catastrophes can be largely divided into the following categories:

1. Self inflicted sins.
   Car accidents can be self-inflicted due to one's carelessness caused by ignoring traffic signs and reckless driving. Also, if a parishioner practices religion in name only, and ignore the practice of going to the temple, one will not be awarded benefits from the Gohonzon. It is better to blame oneself than to possess a bitter feeling toward the faith. Nissen Shonin stated: "To receive benefit depends on one's deepness or shallowness in the faith. Do not say that the Law refrains from awarding benefits when your faith was weak".
2. A warning (admonition) from the Gohonzon.
   Having received benefits in the past and owing a debt of gratitude to the Gohonzon, neglecting or having doubts or disillusionment about the religion, one may receive a "penalty" punishment. Recognize "it as an admonition from the Gohonzon" and accept it as benevolence from the Gohonzon. It is important to have a soul of repentance and to make improvements.
3. A Serious Incident becomes a Lesser one
   This usually means warding off what could have potentially been a serious incident. Examples include canceling a trip at the last moment only to find out that the plane you were scheduled to board had crashed.

Is Fuse a fee?

Q: Is it proper to construe that a Fuse made to a priest at an Oko Service is a fee?

A: The late 17th Head Priest of HBS, Ishioka Nichiyo Shonin, described "Fuse" as follows:
The Fuse given to a priest is not a fee. An Oko Service is to listen to the teachings of the Buddha and paying gratitude to Buddha's great benevolence and to Nichiren Shonin's great mercy and compassion. The beneficence is not for the priest. It is to be offered to the Gohonzon. The priest is merely taking charge of the Fuse. Upon returning to the temple, the priest presents the Fuse to the altar and addresses it by saying, "This is from the true heart of the parishioners". In turn, the parishioners can receive benefits. There are two types of beneficence; One is, "Expounding the teachings of Buddhism to others (Hosse)", and the other, "Giving material gifts or donations to others (Zaise)". "Hosse" is bestowing and elucidating Buddha's teachings. "Zaise" is supporting the sect and temples. It can be construed as an offering made to the priest of the parishioner's own free will to aiding them.For example, at an Oko Service the priest preaches the teachings of the Lotus Sutra to accumulate merits of "Hosse". In response, the attending parishioners provide Fuse to accumulate the merits of "Zaise". As such, the Fuse is for the reason of mercy and compassion provided by the Buddha, and to accumulate one's own merits. It is wrong to think of it as a fee.

Why dose Buddha inflict penalties?

Q: The Buddha and Nichiren Shonin are deeply compassionate individuals. Why do they impose penalties? Likewise, why are some parishioners penalized for slandering the Dharma and some are

not? And why are non-parishioners, no matter how much they slander religion, not penalized?

A: A penalty is inflicted because the Buddha and Nichiren Shonin are deeply compassionate individuals. Nissen Shonin stated:"Persons who impose penalties are deeply loving and sympathetic persons". The Buddha, through compassion, imposes penalty so that, through repentance, one can improve on his/her religious practices. He never penalizes anyone based on hate or opposition. From this standpoint, the penalty from the Buddha and Nichiren Shonin is to subdue evil and it is a type of benefit. Thus, HBS crown the Chinese character of "Penalty" (Bachi) with the honorific "O" and refers to it as "Obachi". Next, in response to slandering the Dharma and negligence, Nissen Shonin stated: "To consider a penalty as a penalty is a penalty". In some instance, one may be unaware that he may have been provided with a penalty. Further, Nissen Shonin stated: "Not encountering penalty is a true penalty. Unless penalty is provided, a soul of religion will not arise". The Buddha and Nichiren Shonin have abandoned those people who slandered the Dharma. In answer to why outsiders are not penalized, Nissen Shonin stated:"It is beyond argument for non-students or a person that does not want to learn anything". Only by entering into a path of learning, one can learn. Since non-believers have no affinity for religion there is no way to provide them with a penalty. There is also a penalty that is "Provided to oneself by oneself". Because one has ignored the rules of living, by retribution they encounter misfortunes and must undergo hardships. There are numerous examples of self-inflicted penalties. Self-inflicted penalties and penalties provided by Buddha's compassion must be considered separately.

Part IV Selected Writings of Nissen Shonin

Invisible Merits:

There are two types of benefits. One ie a clear-cut visible benefit. The other is an unperceived invisible benefit provided by the Gohonzon. Some examples of unperceived divine interventions are as follows;a house catches on fire soon after you had left the premise or having missed boarding a ship that sank. There are examples of people with ill health who have received unperceived benefits after joining HBS. The powers of the religion will protect believers from an ill-fated future path. These are some examples of unperceived invisible benefits provided by the Gohonzon.

A Wish not Granted is also a Benefit:

It is elucidated in the Lotus Sutra that a beliver's wish will always be granted by praying fervently. However, a wish is not always fulfilled even when one fervently practices the teachings. Why is this? Answer:The Buddha provides only what is beneficial to the believers. Unbefitting benefits will not be granted. To that end, an unanswered wish can also be considered as a reward. We, lay people, are unaware of what is in store for us in the future. However, the Buddha, who is aware of the past, present and future worlds, knows what is best for us. Therefore, a wish may go unanswered. It is with benevolent intent that the Buddha grants beneficial rewards to the practitioners.

One's Faith Will Decline By Not Suppressing Heretical Teachings:

If one desires to strengthen their faith, it is important to propagate the teachings of the Lotus Sutra by converting others to the religion. One also must suppress heretical teachings. Resigning practices only to oneself will likely cause one's religious faith to decline. It is important to convert othere to the religion of the Lotus Sutra in order to eradicate sins.

Praying for the Promotion of the Lotus Sutra and the Converting of Others:

To improve your fortune, success, or poor health, it is important to convert others to the true religion of the Lotus Sutra through proper instructions and guidance. In this manner, sins will be immediately eradicated and all wishes will be granted.

By Receiving Visible Merits One's Religious Practices will Deepen:

During the Period of the Last Dharma, a majority of the people believed that there was no Pure Buddha Land or Hell. To join one's hande together in prayer to Gods and Buddhas was considered a shameful act. Those who are familiar with other sects would not lend an ear to learn about the HBS religion, but, in this age, it is important to spread the true teachings of the Lotus

Sutra that was assigned to Jogyo Bodhisattva by the Eternal Buddha. Providing visible benefits or punishments to scholars and non-scholars, the rich and the poor, will arouse them to engage in the pure religion of the Lotus Sutra.

Techniques for Propagating HBS Religion:

One must not use harsh worde to guide a person to the HBS religion. People will be receptive to gentle, kind, and deliberate persuasions. However, if you encounter those who are not at all receptive, it is permissible to cease your efforts to convert them. Those people would do more harm than good to other practioners.

Complaints About Not Receiving Rewards:

Some practioners complain that their prayer for benefit has not been answered. That is because they are weak in their religious practices. It is not right to blame this on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra or the Gohonzon. It is inappropriate to criticize the Odaimoku.

Rely on the Odaimoku and Do Not Deplore the World:

Life in this world is like a dream of having joy and sorrow in quick succession. One should be delighted in having the opportunity to come in contact with the teachings of the true Dharma. And conversely, we should not blame the world for its shortsightedness. HBS practitioner should have complete trust in the teachings of the Lotus Sutra and not be concerned about petty things. Leave everything in the hand of the Lotus Sutra and chant the Odaimoku instinctively at every opportunity. Such people are true practitioners.

The Purpose of Oko:

The "Nyorai Jinriki Hon" (The Supernatural Powers of the Tathagata) elucidated that a practitioner's home be primarily used as a "school" to display the Scripture, chant the Odaimoku and listen to the priest's sermon. In other words, the practitioner's home is used for the purpose of spreading the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Through the virtuous deeds, the practitioner and members of the family can receive benefits. The service also serves to provide merit transference to the deceased as well as to filter sins of the family.

A Sermon is like Partaking of a Meal:

Listening to a sermon on the teachings of the Lotus Sutra is like having a daily meal. Therefore,

listen to as many sermons as you can.

Listening to Sermons is a Great Merit:

If you listen to a foolish person for a day his foolishness will grow on you. On the other hand, listening to the sermons about Buddha and Nichiren Shonin's teachings will create virtuous deeds and merits. It is important that you do not forget what you've heard. In fact, forgetting the content of the sermon is more damaging than loosing a great sum of money. A practitioner, who is aware of it, is a real practitioner. There are many practitioner who do not understand the importance of a sermon nor are aware of what bad things could be in store for them in the future.

Knowing It and Not Doing It:

No matter how many sermons one Iistened to, they serve no purpose if you do not put into practice what you have heard.

The Gohonzon First and Foremost:

Revere the Gohonzon first when praying. Decorate the altar first, before you put fancy clothes on yourself. To avoid sickness, make sure that there are no ill thoughts which will revile the Dharma during your religious practices. Before you take the time and money to decorate your home, decorate the altar with necessary items. If you want to eat good meals, offer carefully selected offering at the altar. If your home or business is important to you, then strive to spread the teachings of the Lotus Sutra to others. Always keep in mind that you were fortunate to have come in contact with this difficult and true religion and be delighted. By building merits through consistent practice of the religion, everything will function smoothly through the support and compassion of the Odaimoku, the Eternal Buddha, and Nichiren Shonin.

Reverence is through Action:

The Gohonzon is the living body of the Buddha. Even if you're doubtful, serve the altar with a feeling of reverence and chant the Odaimoku. By doing so, one will come to realize that the Gohonzon is alive and is the spirit of Buddha himself.

Serve the Priest:

The Priest is your master. He is the one who expounds and explains the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. Do not express your feelings about your Head Priests or Priests based on your whims

because by doing so will create a sin. It is stated in the "Fukyo Bosatsu Pon" (The Bodhisattva Never Disparaging) of the Lotus Sutra, and by both Nichiren Shonin and Nichiryu Shonin, that one must avoid disparaging comments about priests.

To Buddha Measly Monetary Contribution. To Children Large Sums:

A Japanese proverb states:"Only one cent to the Buddha and one hundred dollars to the children." This proverb illustrates that even a small amount of money is begrudgingly spent on the priests or to the temple, yet, a large sum of money is lavishly spent on children. Human beings possess three kinds of paisons;greed, anger, and affliction. While it is difficult to avoid greed, it is important to overcome it by riding in the boat of the Wonderful Dharma.

Attaining Good Fortune:

By engaging in activities of spreading the teachings and protecting the temple, one will attain good fortunes.

Offerings to Priests:

It is important to support priests engaged in the spreading of its teachings by contributing various offerings, such as money, food, drink and clothing or the like. These offerings will assist in achieving meritorious rewards.

What is reviling the Dharma?

How does one revile the Buddhist teachings? By ignoring the Scripture of the Lotus Sutra, the main revered figure, the altar, the Odaimoku, and turning one's spirit to other faiths. Worshipping other religious sects is an act of reviling the Dharma.

Why are People without Religion not punished?

Answer:A divine punishment may not occur during the present life, but may befall in the form of three evil realms (hell, hungry spirits, and that of animal) in the future world. But why are those who engage in religions that revile the Dharma or neglect to practice the religion not punished? Answer:Those people are not in the vision of the Gohonzon. They are not in the center of attention by the Buddha. They are being ignored. However, the Gohonzon will punish a parishioner who violates the teachings in some form. That does not mean that the Gohonzon is doing it from hatred. lt is from a manifestation of mercy and compassion.

Pray Diligently:

Ignoring the Odaimoku and wavering to other types of religion is a spirit of delusion. One should overcome that behavior and chant diligently only the Odaimoku of the Gohonzon. By doing so, one's wish will invariably be fulfilled whether one is a veteran parishioner or a new parishioner.

Prayer for a Wish:

There are parishioners whose prayer for a wish is granted and some that are not. Why? Answer:How earnestly one prays will determine how quickly favorable rewards can or cannot be received.

To Develop New Recruits is Most Important:

An important purpose of HBS religion is to convert others to its religion by kindly offering explanation and guidance about the teachings of the Lotus Sutra. In turn, the new convert can spread its teachings to others. If there is a parishioner who is reviling the Dharma, it is very important to alert that person through kind chosen words of compassion and careful reasoning to persuade them from doing it.

Destiny Exists in Oneself and not in Heaven:

In this world, a rule of cause and effect governs everything. People, who understand this rule, do not curse the Gohonzon or others. The suffering one experiences is a direct result of bad seeds that were planted. If you want future requital, plant good seeds now. To acquire happiness, strive to spread the religion. To blame Heaven is wrong. Destiny is created by oneself, and not by God or other supreme power.

Bad Mouthing is a Sin:

A parishioner criticizing another parishioner is worse than criticizing Shakyamuni Buddha. If a parishioner errors in behavior or in religious practices, confront that person and attempt to clarify the wrong doings in a civil manner.

Know your Foolishness and Remove it:

To think you're perfect and without fault is a sign of self-conceit. To know your foolishness is

truly intelligent.

To Loan or Borrowing Money is Forbidden:

Borrowing or loaning money between parishioners only creates problems and destroys group cooperation. Refrain from it.

Devout Life:

Observe the Odaimoku script as a living Buddha instead of seeing it as a mere Chinese "kanji" Scripture. The Odaimoku is the living spirit of Buddha. A parishioner who can not accept it as such will not be able to receive favorable rewards.

The Gohonzon and Nichiren Shonin's Statue as living existence:

Think of the Odaimoku Scripture left behind to the people of the Last Dharma by Nichiren Shonin as his living spirit. When observing Nichiren Shonin's statue, feel that it is Nichiren Shonin himself and chant the Odaimoku. By doing so, the various sufferings and hatreds one possesses in the heart will naturally be quelled, and consequently, one will be able to receive favorable rewards. That, indeed, is a mysterious power.

Offer Prayer and Chant the Odaimoku Only:

Nichiren Shonin stated that wishes of practitioners of the Lotus Sutra will always be rewarded, but this is based on a repeated chanting of the Odaimoku.

The Path to Survival by Oneself:

There is no path to eradicate suffering and distress other than by chanting the Odaimoku and following the teachings of the Lotus Sutra diligently. The Buddha, with great mercy and compassion, gave us the Odaimoku to chant. However, if the chanting of the Odaimoku is insufficient, sins within the soul will reemerge and cause various illusions. Moreover, a bad soul will torment you, so be careful.

The Odaimoku is a cleaner, Sin is filth:

The Odaimoku is like a cleaner and sins are like filth. Believing in the religious teachings and chanting the Odaimoku from your heart is analagous to a cleaner washing away filth. Sins will be filtered. Chanting the Odaimoku only once ie useful. However, chanting the Odaimoku repeatedly will sweep your soul with the Odaimoku, and will enable you to accumulate immeasurable merits.

Chanting the Odaimoku:

By diligently chanting the Odaimoku in front of a Gohonzon, the spirits of the Buddha, Taho Buddha, Bodhisattvas, Guardian Kings of Heaven and others will all congregate together to protect you. That is analogous to water attracting fish and forests attracting birds.

Reciting the Sutra is to Reviling the Fine Dharma:

Some people of other sects say, "you, Nissen Shonin recite the One Session of the Fine Congregation, the Title of the Twenty-eight Chapters of the Lotus Sutra, and other phrases in the "Divine or Supernatural Power". Isn't that practice contrary to what you say and do?"

Let me respond to that comment. The priests of other sects merely read the Chinese "kanji" characters of sutras without understanding their true meanings. An absurd practice. The sutras in the "One Session of the Fine Congregation" praised the Odaimoku, and the phrases used are for the purpose of spreading the Lotus Sutra teachings. Reciting it is not in anticipation for enlightenment or attaining Buddhahood. Therefore, those who recite randomly the selected sutras or phrases of Nichiren Shonin's teachings by just reading the "kanji" merely use this to receive merits. That is a mistaken viewpoint. Reciting sutras, instead of chanting the Odainoku, is destroying Nichiren Shonin's intention for the salvation of the people. We, HBS practitioners, should voice our objection to reciting sutras in a wrong manner. The Basic Principle of the Odaimoku: Most people think that the Odaimoku of the Wonderful Dharma is the title of the Lotus Sutra. It is not. Nor is it a connotation of its teachings. It is a part of the twenty-eight chapters and 69,384 words contained in the eight scrolls, which gave birth to the Lotus Sutra, the foundation and spirit of the Odaimoku. It is a deep secret treasure contained in the "Ichinen Sanzen" (Three Thousand Realms in a Moment's Thought", which only the Buddha can receive.) To be born as a human being and to be able to bear the priceless religious teachings is a reward. Therefore, discard your forbearance and prejudice. Chant only the Odainoku, Namumyohorengekyo, of the Eternal Buddha with a faithful soul.

Chant the Odaimoku without Doubt or Thought:

Do not entertain various thoughts while chanting the Odaimoku. Of course, to doubt the Odainoku is not good. Just chant the Odaimoku with a feeling of gratefulness. Why? Because tbe Odaimoku of the Fine Dharma embraces Buddha's spirit. It is difficult for the common people to comprehend. By earnestly chanting the Odaimoku, one can attain spiritual enlightenment of the Buddha. Even an extraordinary porson like Great Master Tendai was unable to understand the

Buddha's world of enlightenment. Therefore, it is unlikely that a common pereon of the Mappo Period will be able to comprehend it by self-study. One can gain and store merits of enlightenment in the soul from the energy embodied in the Odaimoku. They can also enter into the same world of enlightenment that the Eternal Buddha had experienced by chanting the Odaimoku.

Enter the Faith by Chanting the Odaimoku:

Nichiren Shonin stated:"No matter what thoughts arise in the mind, the power of the Odaimoku will enter your soul by chanting the Odaimoku by mouth". Those who see the figure of Nichiren Shonin praying may think that they are his followers, but various worldly thoughts of common peoples' soul should not be relied upon. Rely only on the Odaimoku, Namumyohorengekyo. Chant it until worldly thoughts are dismissed from the mind. When that happens, the Odaimoku of the Buddha and your soul will come to a mutual understanding and your soul will enter the Gohonzon. This condition is known as the immediate enlightenment.

Chant and Listen:

The Odnimoku is the best medicine. This medicine can be consumed by listening to the ehanting sound of the Odaimoku. It will awaken a sleeping soul and activate it. When the Scripture and the Odaimoku merges, religious favors can be received Chant the Odaimoku fervently and listen to it intently. It may be a difficult practice at first, but through continuous chanting favorable rewards can be received. The Lotus Sutra elucidated:"By chanting the Odaimoku, one will be saved from various sufferings and agonies".

Submitting to the True Teachings of "Shakubuku":

Shakubuku means denouncing and suppressing evil heretical teachings, and to guide one to the true teachings of Buddhiem in this period of the last Dharma. It is important to keep in mind that Shakubuku is a manifestation of mercy and compassion. Scolding will only invite hostility. It will not serve to guide one to the true teachings.

Verbal Attack is a Great Sin:

Verbally attacking parishioners and breaking the harmony of an order is committing a great sin. No matter what the circumstance may be, do not bad-mouth others behind their back. A face-to-face Shakubuku confrontation is most preferable. Mutually reproving persons for their conduct, breaking unity, and causing confusion among parishioners must be avoided. Executing Shakubuku by acting as an intermediary is a very difficult task. Only a handful of practitioners are capable of doing it.

As long as you uphold and keep the Sacred Object (Myoho), all of saints and gods will come around to protect you in the same manner as soldiers guard their king, parents protect their children and will sustain you as water sustain fish, fish depend on water and rain sustains grass and trees and tree provide a nesting place for birds. Like the shadows follow you not only during the daylight but also in the moonlight, the Sacred Object is always around you to protect you. You must believe how powerful the Sacred Object (Myoho) is.

Odimoku (Myohorengekyo) What reality is.

It contains profound meanings. Each and every existing thing of the whole universe fuses with each other and the properties of those existing things are of the same quality. They are the constituents of momentary consciousness as well as microscopic objects. This is what Butsuryu believers experience in their hearts when they recite Odaimoku and we believe that all of us have the potential to become a Buddha. This is the truth that the Buddha perceived. Therefore, Myohorengekyo (Daimoku) proves that the truth constituting the entire universe that the Buddha perceived and the potential for becoming a Buddha are of the same quality. Myohorengekyo (Daimoku) is extremely powerful and edifying to all of us.

Three treasures in a period without the Buddha

Three treasures during the period of Buddha Sakyamuni were the Buddha (Buddha Sakyamuni), his teachings (Dharma) and followers of the Buddhisum (disciples). In the present day without Buddha, we have the wooden carved image of the Buddha. For Honmon Butsuryushu, however, the Odaimoku(Gohonzon) is the treasure of the spirit of the Buddha. Reciting the Odaimoku is the treasure of the Dharma and the devoted followers who propagate this Daimoku to save the world are the treasure of Buddha's disciples. Therefore, devoted Buddhist priests and followers are treasures of the Buddha in this Mappo period.

The Sacred Object (Myoho) is living.

The wise people understand existence of Buddha, the power of the Fine Dharma (Myoho). However, the fools in the period without Buddha can not. No one can doubt the definite existence of the substance of life even though it is not visible to us. Nevertheless, fools tend to deny its existence since they cannot see it with their own eyes. Having felt compassion for them, the Buddha displayed the Sacred Object in writing for our sake. The wooden carved image of Buddha is meant to help us believe in the existence of the invisible Myoho (the Sacred Object-Honzon). Zen Buddhists reject this to be image worshiping because they regard their own minds higher than tangible things. These people fall in the evil path of self-conceit because they believe that the sacred object exists in the minds of ashamed human beings. We must understand that the Sacred Object and the wooden carved image of Boddhisattve are real. They have a soul. They are living.

Selection of the Sacred Object

As the Primordial Sacred Object is what we need to uphold and rely upon, it has to be as valuable as it could be. Otherwise, all our faith and practice would be in vain. For instance, when you expect something from others, you had better depend on the wise, the old, the skilled, or the good, because the fool, the young, the unskilled and the bad only disappoint you. Likewise, the Sacred Object has a capability not only to distinguish between a hypothesis and a truth, but also to hold all kinds of power and merits. We also must know that Daimoku (NamuMyohorengekyo) is the Sacred Object, the most appropriate guiding light for us today. Blessed, only those who honestly pray toward this Daimoku-the Sacred Object truly can be the happiest.

Two Buddhas

But for our minds, neither the teaching (Dharma) nor the Buddha would exist. In the Lotus Sutra, it is written: "I am with you whenever and wherever you are." This teaches us that the eternal Buddha resides even in our lay followers' minds. However, you are wrong if you think that you do not need to uphold the Sacred Object (Myoho). A Buddha described in the Sacred Object (Myoho) is the most refined in the Buddha's world. But a Buddha in our mind is the one which resides within an unrefined human being. There is a theory that the Buddha and a lay follower are united in mind. The lay follower is the Bodhesattva Visistacaritra. Therefore, we are united with Nichiren. In reality, we obtain such merits from the power of faith and of the Lotus Sutra since we revere and uphold honestly the Sacred Object (Myoho). We must not get conceited.

What is substance of the Sacred Object (Myoho)?

It is not a scripture of the Lots Sutra. It is not a meaning of the Lotus Sutra, either. The Buddha says that it is the spirit of the whole Lotus Sutra. It is a major source of life that all of the sentient beings and their surroundings of the entire universe must depend on. The Mahsattva Tendai wrote in his books, GENGI 1 that this Sacred Object (Myoho) is the basis of the whole. Depiction of various saints being converted to this Sacred Object (Myoho) is in a mandala of ten worlds. The Honmon Butsuryushu, thus, considers Daimoku (Myoho) to be the Sacred Object.

All sentient beings are composed of a group of five atomic elements. Wherever those beings are, surroundings (countries and lands) exist. Atomic elements, sentient beings and surroundings are three indivisible things. Such truth of co-existence of three elements in harmony is detailed in the teaching of the Lotus Sutra. It is important to know that Diaimoku (Myoho) is the vital element which embodies the content and the merit of this teaching.

If we follow the logic in this manner, Myoho is the only real thing in this world, not a mountain, an ocean, or a land. The sky, the earth and all living beings, all of which are included in the merit of Myoho. If we understand this truth, we can become the Buddha. Unfortunately, all of us, lay followers are not aware of this and keep stumbling over our own faults by not believing the truth of the universe. We do not know that we owe the merit of Myoho to enjoy the sun, the

moon, fire, water, grass, trees, Iands and four seasons. We do not have an ability to perceive the merit of Myoho. If we believe and recite the Daimoku earnestly, we will know that Myoho has the meritorious power to make us become a Buddha.

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